

Byline

Writers Helping Writers

September
2019

Canadian Authors Association - National Capital Region

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WORK, REST, PLAY WRITING JOYS AND CHALLENGES

By Arlene Smith
President, CAA-NCR

What did you do for work this summer?

For rest?

For play?

How often did you work, rest and play at the same time?

Those questions were the topics for discussion at my church recently, and we were surprised to discover how often we choose to spend our time doing things that feed us in more ways than one.

Gardening is work for sure, but meditative and joy-filled too. We take days to prepare for **camping** trips and more days cleaning up after, but the time spent resting by the campfire or playing in the lake makes it all worth while. A **hike** up a forest path accelerates our heart rate and strains the muscles, and then we get to enjoy the view and sleep really well at night.

WRITING IS WORK, REST AND PLAY TOO.

Writing is hard work. Whether it's paid work for our jobs, pulling together the first draft of a novel, or labouring over the perfect word to capture the essence of a poetic idea, writing taxes us. We must give of ourselves mentally, physically and emotionally—sometimes painfully—to get words on the page.

We play with the words. We move them around, change them, and chew on them until they feel just right. We feel that jolt of joy when we *know* that we've captured some elusive idea exactly right.

The rest comes with satisfaction. We are all writers because it's something we *need* to do. When we have fulfilled that need, expended the energy and played with ideas, gratified rest follows. Even if we

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September Meeting

First Page Challenge
Tuesday, September 17
7:15 p.m.

McNabb Recreation Centre,
Meeting Room C

How to make the most of the first page
of your manuscript.

October Meeting

Writing Workshop and the
CAA-NCR AGM
Tuesday, October 8
7:15 p.m.

McNabb Recreation Centre,
Meeting Room B

We'll bust through writer's block with
help from Janet Burroway, Stephen
King and [Rory's Story Cubes](#).

know a work is not complete or we will need to revisit a paragraph or concept, we rest with the same kind of sense of accomplishment that the hiker experiences at the top of the mountain. The rest serves our writing too. When we step away and then return, the time away gives us fresh perspective and we see ways to make that work even better.

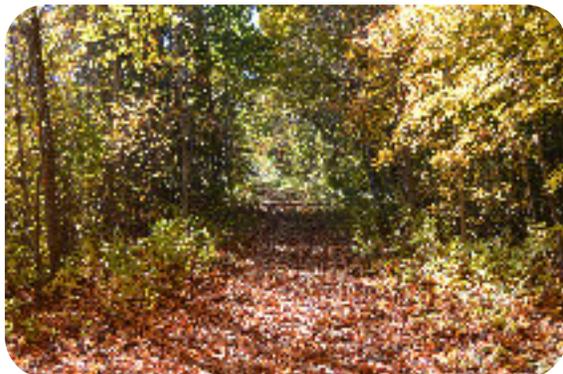
KEEPING THE BALANCE

Are you feeling that writing is nothing but work? Are you playing and not taking it seriously? Have you rested for quite long enough and need to get back to work?

It's important to balance the three concepts. If writing feels like drudgery, add a little playfulness in some way that feels right. Remember that words have great power and take a contemplative look at the ones you choose and expend the time and energy to make your work better. Use rest to feed your projects for the best results.

LET US HELP

This year we have [meetings](#) planned with themes that serve all three of those concepts. Please join us and see how your writing benefits.



Canadian Authors Association
National Capital Region

Website

<http://canadianauthors.org/nationalcapitalregion>

Email

NCRadmin@canadianauthors.org

NATIONAL CAPITAL WRITING CONTEST 2019

FIRST PLACE - POETRY

Judge's Comment

"This tightly wound and wounding poem's nine couplets grabbed me by the throat from the start with its visceral and sensual personification and capture of Jealousy . . . The poet conveys the insidious nature of jealousy to great effect." —JC Sulzenko

JEALOUSY

By Susan J. Atkinson



Jealousy can do more than get under the skin,
it can arrive unexpectedly on the doorstep late in the night,

in the middle of a dinner party, ready to hold hands
with Indulgence, whose good cheer has left the other guests

sitting too close, saying too much, seeing things not as they are.
Jealousy shows up as Martinis trip on unsteady stems,

slinks in, garish in lime-green, glint in the eye, looking for trouble
(funny how it takes its place quietly, just as coffee is served),

slides in beside the knives and napkins, waiting like an after-dinner-mint,
for the end of the meal when so much has been said and done

and it can be popped into a willing mouth, sucked and
smacked between warm lips, smooth and round the size of a pebble,

fitting under the tongue so the vile shade of envy spreads,
flavour clinging, wanting to be wanted, wanting a partner

for the night, to be held tight, embraced and cuddled, emerald prickles
brushing cheek to cheek, hot closeness bringing comfort and then

Jealousy, having found its mate, is ready to be carried to bed,
its taste still under the tongue, splinters piercing tender skin.



WOMEN KILLING IT CRIME WRITERS FESTIVAL

By Adrienne Stevenson

3 Days of Murder, Motives and MOs

The third annual festival under this banner was held Friday, August 30 to Sunday, September 1 at various locations in Picton, Ontario. Led by **Vicki Delany and Janet Kellough**, a team of local volunteers and sponsors put on another excellent festival.

I had attended the original version in 2017 and was attracted back by the slate of presenters, most of whom were new to me. Vicki's vast list of contacts in the crime writing world means that she always has new and interesting people to call on. I continue to be astonished at the depth and variety of Canadian crime writers, particularly women writing in this genre. Books ranging from cozy to thriller were represented.

AUTHOR SPEED-DATING ROUND ROBIN

On Friday evening, the event opened with an **author speed-dating round robin**, held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Eight authors circulated around tables, giving a five-minute pitch on their most recent book. In the case of series, they included a precis of the premise along with position in the genre and some information on the theme. Participating authors for the weekend: **Ginger Bolton, Brenda Chapman, Vicki Delany, Joy Fielding, S.M. Hurley, Ausma Zehanat Khan, Hanna Mary McKinnon and Iona Whitshaw.**



Authors at *Women Killing It*:

Front: Ausma Zehanat Khan, Joy Fielding, Brenda Chapman, Hanna Mary McKinnon

Back: Janet Kellough, Vicki Delany, Ginger Bolton, Iona Whitshaw, S.M. Hurley

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Upcoming Meetings



7:15 p.m.

MCNABB COMMUNITY CENTRE, 180 PERCY STREET

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

First Page Challenge

Six writers submitted the first pages of their manuscripts, and at our first meeting of the season they will receive feedback from [Stacey D. Atkinson](#), editor, and [Jeff Ross](#), author and writing instructor. Join us to see how their work captured readers from the first page and to learn how your first page can engage readers, agents or publishers.

Tuesday, October 8, 2019

Writing Workshop

CAA-NCR Annual General Meeting

We'll walk through the best tips from [Writing Fiction](#) by Janet Burroway and apply them to our works in progress or new projects. Have you read [On Writing](#) by Stephen King? He has practical suggestions from improving writing. We'll use [Rory's Story Cubes](#) to bust through writer's block.

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

Polishing Your Manuscript, with Nerys Parry

You've completed your manuscript and now you want to send it out to the world. Before you do, you need to make sure it is as professional as possible. Nerys Parry shares her expertise in preparing a polished manuscript.

Sunday, December 8, 2019

Winter Social

1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the home of Arlene Smith
An afternoon of feasting on food and words.

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Writing: For Theatre, For Novels, with [Melissa Yi](#)

The author of the Hope Sze mystery series has penned books and also written and performed *I Am the Most Unfeeling Doctor in the World (and Other True Tales from the Emergency Room)*. She will share her expertise in writing for theatre and let us know how it compares and how it can enrich writing in other forms and genres.

PLOTTING THE MYSTERY NOVEL

Saturday morning saw the first of two writing workshops at the Picton Public Library. Vicki Delany spoke on various aspects of plotting the mystery novel. She emphasized the **need for distinct major characters, each with their own voice, goals, motive, conflict and secrets**, to best develop the plot structure.

I found her interpretation of **the three-act structure**, such that the climax of acts two and three come close together, quite illuminating as applied to mystery novels, and think it applicable to other types of commercial fiction. Rather than irritating the reader by either springing an ending on them or failing to tie up at least the main plot, it allows sufficient room in act three to wind up the story.

She cited two books that are valuable additions to any library: *On Writing* by Stephen King and *Writing the Breakout Novel* by Donald Maass

TEA WITH THE AUTHORS

Saturday afternoon moved back to St. Andrew's, for traditional tea with baked goods accompanied by individual author presentations. Ginger Bolton, Vicki Delany, S.M. Hurley and Iona Whitshaw answered questions set by the moderator and the audience on topics ranging from **subject matter to professional issues**.

Three of the four are writing series, two of which are "cozy" mysteries, which have a huge U.S. market. Many of these books are on the lighter side of the genre, with amateur sleuths and less overt sex and violence. Historical mysteries also appear popular at the moment. Stories with local (i.e. Canadian) flavour have a more limited audience, at least according to American publishers.

SPOOKY EVENING WITH AUTHORS

On Saturday evening, we met in the stone chapel at Glenwood Cemetery for Q&A in a panel format: Brenda Chapman, Joy Fielding, Ausma Zehanat Khan and Hanna Mary McKinnon.

These authors' books are on the darker side of the genre, including police procedurals, thrillers and psychological drama. Most are contemporary and involve current themes, but some write mainly stand-alone books while others write series with repeating investigators.

The questions posed were similar to the afternoon, although there was more interest from the audience on **ethical issues** when dealing with difficult subject matter. Ms. Khan ably anchored the author responses on the question of cultural appropriation, one of the most interesting and controversial topics of the evening.

POINT OF VIEW (POV)

Sunday morning we were back at the library for the final workshop, given by Brenda Chapman on Point of View. Brenda reviewed **the basic POV types**: first person (narrator is inside the story, intimate, common in modern novels), second person (difficult and rarely used apart from short passages), third person omniscient (old-fashioned, legendary/god-mode, narrator is outside the story), third person objective (view from outside the story, camera-like, no interpretation), and third person restricted (narrator concealed but character viewpoint can be intimate, character has limited knowledge to their own thoughts and observations). We discussed their different applications, including using several different ones during the course of a novel.

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BYLINE: Call for Submissions

Byline is a quarterly publication of the National Capital Region Branch of Canadian Authors Association. Articles on the process of writing, tips, interviews, literary events and member achievements welcome.

Send to [Byline](#).

Deadlines:

Fall Issue: August 15

Winter Issue: November 15

Spring Issue: February 15

Summer Issue: May 15

WOMEN KILLING IT

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There were two exercises. In one, each attendee wrote a short scene in first person, showing two people in a difficult situation. In the second, each took that scene and re-wrote it in third person objective. This provided a chance to see **how the pace and tension of a scene can be manipulated using POV**, as well as how difficult it is not to intrude when maintaining the objective viewpoint. The accompanying handout gave pros and cons of each view and some tips for where they would be most useful.

A GOOD EVENT FOR READERS AND WRITERS

All of the events included snacks and drinks with the price of admission, and all were ticketed separately so that attendees could choose some or all, although numbers of participants in the workshops were capped at about twenty. The larger sessions had door prizes of book totes and wine, and the local bookstore, Books & Co. had presenters' books for sale. Events were a comfortable length, well-paced, and had a good variety of format. There was something for everyone, at every level of interest. A good event for both readers and writers.

CONSIDER A TRIP TO THE COUNTY NEXT YEAR

Picton is the largest town in Prince Edward County, and is a charming spot with many different kinds of accommodation, restaurants and things to do. All of the festival events were in the central part of the town, within easy walking distance of each other, with ample parking nearby. The County, as it is known, features many other attractions, including wineries, cideries, and Sandbanks Provincial Park. We travelled via highways 7 and 41, rather than tangle with trucks on the 401, and it was a pleasant three-hour drive from Ottawa. **Women Killing It made for a pleasant Labour Day weekend.** The festival has a facebook page, and I recommend following it to get early notice of next year's events: <https://www.facebook.com/WomenKillingItCrime/>. Highly recommended. 



Edward Whittaker is dead.
He's lucky.
He died quickly in a car
crash and robbed his wife
of the
pleasure of killing him
slowly.
1st book



You need a man in
your life they said.
You have to get out
more they said. You
need excitement in
your life they said.
She added
Clarke Ingram to
her life – then
abruptly
disappeared.
2nd book

If you like a mix of humour, romance and mystery you will enjoy
the Windsor Novels—about friends who own condominiums in the same
downtown Ottawa building.
Watch for the 3rd book coming soon.
www.phyllisbohonis.com



Canadian Authors Association National Capital Region

Executive and Coordinators

Please feel free to contact any of the following
with suggestions or concerns

President: [Arlene Smith](#)
Membership: Christine Beelen
Programs: Adrienne Stevenson
Recording Secretary: Phyllis Bohonis
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Branch Historian: Gill Foss

NCWC: Sherrill Wark
West End Writing Circle: Kit Flynn
Byline Editor: [Adrienne Stevenson](#)
Website: Arlene Smith

Writers Helping Writers

OCTOBER MEETING PREVIEW

A TEASER FOR OUR WRITING WORKSHOP MEETING

“2nd Draft = 1st Draft - 10%,” from
On Writing by Stephen King

King writes: “I got a scribble comment that changed the way I wrote my fiction once and forever. Jotted below the machine-generated signature of the editor was this *mot*:

“Not bad, but PUFFY. You need to revise for length. Formula: 2nd Draft = 1st Draft - 10%. Good luck. . . .”

I copied the formula out on a piece of shirt-cardboard and taped it to the wall beside my typewriter. Good things started to happen for me shortly after.”

Try reducing the “puff” by 10% and see what happens.



Photo by Kaitlyn Baker @Kaitlyn Baker

How to run with ideas, with
Story Cubes, by Rory's Story Cubes

“Do you remember when you were a child, and you were running down a hill and picking up speed, and going so fast that you either had to keep running or fall over?

This is a good way to approach your story telling with Rory's Story Cubes.

If you do it as quickly as possible without thinking too hard, you'll be surprised by your storytelling ability.”

We'll roll some cubes and run with ideas.

Join us at our meeting on
Tuesday, October 8
to work, rest and play with words.

On “Summary and Scene,” from *Writing Fiction* by Janet Burroway

Burroway's chapter on **fictional time** covers how to treat time in our writing. A painting or a photograph captures one single moment, but time in fiction is elastic and can be manipulated in many ways. We can cover many years in a few sentences, or stretch out a single moment over several pages.

WRITERS DO THIS THROUGH SUMMARY AND SCENE.

- A **summary** covers a long period of time in a short condensation of events.
- A **scene** delves deeply into a short period of time and extracts the details.

Both are necessary and useful, and fiction flows back and forth between the two. It's important to not summarize when a more intricate examination of a character or event is required, but sometimes we need to murder some darlings and summarize to get on with things. Balance is important.

Go through your writing project and mark out with different coloured markers the scene and the summary.

- Is there a good balance?
- Where do you need to dig deeper?
- What could you let go to keep the story moving?

BLUE MOON RISING

By Robynne Eagan

Judge's Comments:

"The author of this piece has achieved a lyrical rendering of old age, of choice, and love that is at once both beautiful and haunting. Rich, evocative language and a compelling nuanced character. Truth comes in all guises."

—Jean E. Pendziwol

It is the bird that awakens her, as often it does. *Whippoorwill, whippoorwill, whippoorwill.* It's September. Late September. That bird should have gone with the geese.

Shadows that have followed Anneke's dreams beckon from beneath the apple trees. Chestnuts tap at her windowpane despite the lack of breeze.

The vines of summer might overtake the old farmhouse yet, that is what Anneke thinks as she rises from sleep. This might be their year; today, their day. Tendrils beyond her window pane are searching for cracks. Those Creepers were planted with a man's shovel when Will was just a boy, that same spring he dug in the saplings of the now-gnarled apple trees that obscure the meandering lane.

Anneke bore witness to those plantings, so many years back, her clear eyes watching from behind barbed raspberry canes where she crouched on blackened feet. Will sensed the gaze of the girl upon him when he broke the hard earth, but he kept her secret close. Whispers of a feral child were rampant that summer of the saplings. She was raised by bears, the locals said. A lost girl whose parents never went looking.

When it was discovered that Will was meeting the wild-child in the thick of the woods, he was whipped with a willow switch at the hand of his

father. He was to keep his distance, this Will knew. But how could he, fascinated as he was by the way the bear-child moved, and the way she said so much without speaking? What harm could there be in pulling salmon from the rushing creek, or lying together on forest moss to watch sunlight play on dappled leaves? The beatings served only to teach the practice of deceit.

It was the Dutch farmers—the childless pair from over the dell—who tamed the girl and named her, and taught her to mind their sheep. It was William who stood with her in the light of day, much to his parents' dismay. Will was taller than his father by a head by then, and his muscles ran deep. Anneke was wispy with sky-filled eyes and curls that unfurled like waves.

When the time came for Will and Anneke to take their places before the clergyman at the fieldstone church, they stood alone. Will was resolute; Anneke, strong. Their days tumbled forward, one to the other – spring to autumn, babes to children. So many seasons Anneke lost count of the crops that were granted and those taken; the sins, begotten, and those forgotten.

Will's parents were long in their rocky graves when lightning scorched their son along with the dying walnut tree. And the farm of their ancestors fell to the wild child of the woods.

A flickering star at the cusp of night frees Anneke from her reveries and she rises to greet the day. Her footfall, still spry on the worn pine treads, belies her age – ninety-six years all told, she thinks as she makes her way to the kitchen. The song of the pump quivers high-pitched and rising as she works the rusting handle. Anneke appreciates water when she has to work for it, enjoys the gurgle before it spills to the sink.

Stone wells of the county were layered with dust two summers back. Creek beds cracked. Plants withheld their seed. It was a summer much like that of twenty-two years past when Will was struck by the lightning that came with the prayed-for rain. Drought is temporary, Anneke knows, but change is constant.

This year, the valley flourishes with a vengeance. Apple trees are weighted to the ground with offerings, late-blooming hydrangeas nod their white brilliance to autumn's reds and browns. The ladies of St. Bart's (now asleep beneath the churchyard stones) once clucked sharp tongues at the farm-wife of Will who planted those flowers beneath a blue rising moon.

This day is no day for working indoors or out, that is what Anneke decides as she sips strong tea at the harvest table. This air is too still; these roiling clouds, too ripe. Pruning shears

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will hang idly in the shed today. Apple baskets will be left to yearn for harvest.

When the children were young, they would swim on such a day. They would splash in the lake with Shep the dog, and maybe even Will if his chores were complete. The memory of those sparkling forays is waning. No one swims here anymore.

This old sun is playing tricks on the world, that's what Anneke would say if the children were here. And they would believe their mother, as they once believed she was raised by bears. It might be the truth, Anneke explained when a teacher chastised her children for their stories. Truth comes in all guises, Anneke said.

The memory of the mother bear is with her vividly to this day despite the passage of the sundry seasons. Anneke was tumbling with a soft-furred cub in the thorny brambles when its big black mother loomed. This mother accepted Anneke, as simple as that, and from that day forward Anneke wondered if she might not, in truth, be a lost and found cub.

She is a survivor, if nothing more; that's what Will's mother said to the pastor who visited one mosquito-infested day in May. Anneke carried that truth in the crook of her heart forever after.

The fact that she still awakes each morning is a marvel to Anneke, who suspects that she, herself, may be a hydrangea out of sync. There have been weddings, and grandchildren and farewells too plentiful to pencil on the kitchen wall. Reminiscences swirl thick. Yet, still, she stays.

This farm is too much for an old woman on her own, that's what her daughter says when she visits on Sundays. This delights Anneke to no

end. Who wouldn't choose too much over too little?

If not for me, who would Old Bess nuzzle at the dawn of each day? she asks her daughter. And who would spread forget-me-nots where Will was taken? If not for me, who would mind the level of the well in summer, or see to the damper of the cast iron stove in the depths of cold? Who would watch over the bears?

Perhaps I love this earth too much, Anneke thinks.

The mudroom door, never in need of a lock, keens a note of melancholy as Anneke sets out for the barn. Pigweed and burdock are having their way with the potato rows, but she pays them no mind. A birdfeeder dangles, a fencerow sags, a late hummingbird hovers at a wilting Sweet William.

The weathered barn door flaps lopsidedly on the rising breeze, allowing the fallow interior a breath of the unusual day. A swallow dives, a spider web vibrates, Anneke turns her face to the sun.

Old Bess saunters in from the pasture, swishing her tail, hoping for grain. Soon there will be dry hay from the mow, but for now, summer's bounty is still hers for the taking. The horse nestles her soft greying muzzle against Anneke's sun-browned arm. In times past, Anneke would pick pebbles from the Belgian's hooves, but these days the old horse has to make do. The paddock gate will be left to swing freely today. Old Bess won't go far.

Beyond the pasture, a fools-gold sun illuminates the lake, then slips away. "Summer and fall, dancing a tango," Anneke says, a lilt of joy in her tone. And then she follows that light, with Bess in tow, to the granite ledge where the children basked when

the heat ran deep. "It's been so long," she says.

Anneke's wellies are left to stand sentinel at the edge of the farm when she steps free.

When did she last feel the heat of granite beneath her feet? Her denim dungarees are folded neatly and left where rock meets lake; her underthings, bleached and mended much to her daughter's chagrin, are set on top. A faded plaid shirt – once Will's – flutters to jagged rock, his sweat in the seams, his strength in its shape.

Fading light, grey sky, cool water. Has Anneke ever joined the lake so late?

She skims the surface in a crooked dive, icy water churning against startled flesh. Thighs tingle, withered arms cut through the chill. Bess snorts from the rocky shore.

The west wind rises, dropping rain upon the lake and on Anneke's upturned face where she is floating, floating, white toes skyward. A ray of sun escapes through a hole in the sky, its fleeting heat teasing.

Clear light, dark sky, black water. A lone cicada sings the glories of the ebbing season.

Old Bess is at Anneke's side now, head bobbing, hooves working beneath the waves.

Dark sky, dark clouds, dark water. Which, the reflection of the other?

A flash of lightning shocks the waiting air. The lake sways. Bess's nostrils flare.

Black sky.

Black water.

Blue moon rising.

Whippoorwill,

whippoorwill,

whippoorwill.



Grief Sonata in Three Parts

I the last year

Anticipatory grief, it's called,
that wraps around my throat and pulls
forcing unwanted pools, smearing my makeup.
I sort her few treasures:
my father's wartime letters,
bits of costume jewellery,
photos of her in pillbox hats and white gloves
her father's obituary.
From her bed in the nursing home she stares,
stone-eyed, at nothing,
longing for and fearing release.
She has gone in and pulled the drapes against joy.
The light hurts her eyes, she says.

II insatiable

As my mother approaches the end
there is nothing left for her
and us
but to endure her suffering.
Offerings of chocolates, flowers, Murder, She Wrote dvd's
bring no joy.
We try pretty sweaters, home-cooked suppers, great-grandchildren.
"That baby is so spoiled," she says.
"I don't like lasagna. Don't bring me that again,"
and
"You were always such an insatiable child."

III grieving

My tears will not behave.
They show up in inappropriate places:
airports, grocery stores,
worrying strangers in the cereal aisles.
I want to reassure people: pay no attention,
it's only grief.
Normally, my sorrow minds its manners,
stays within its banks.
But lately, it will not be told.
Embarrassing, to be seen with such undisciplined emotion.
I'm sorry, I plead silently, it doesn't usually behave like this.

National Capital
Writing Contest
2019

Honourable Mention
Poetry

Judge's Comment:

*"This poem cannot fail to touch
the reader.*

*Each of the sonata's three
sections offers perspectives
differing in time and place on
the grieving a daughter endures
as she bears witness to her
mother's
moment-by-moment
decline."*

— JC Sulzenko

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- News or book reviews are free for members.

Member Rates:

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- 1/8 Byline page: FREE
- 1/4 Byline page: \$15
- 1/2 Byline page: \$30

One year: **4 issues for price of three**

- 1/8 Byline page: FREE
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- 1/2 Byline page: \$90

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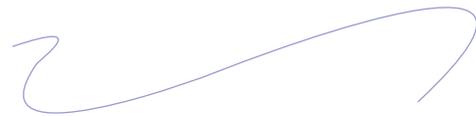
- 1/8 Byline page: \$15
- 1/4 Byline page: \$30
- 1/2 Byline page: \$50

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- 1/4 Byline page: \$90
- 1/2 Byline page: \$150

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Byline is looking for your input!

What puts fire in your writing belly?

What moves your butt from TV viewing to the writing desk?

What keeps you focused on that work-in-progress?

Tell our *Byline* readers your tricks of the trade. How do you turn “I should have finished” into “I just published!”

[Share your tips](#) for writing success.



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