

PenChant

To increase awareness and appreciation of the Literary Arts

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2006

Where do we go from here?

In a couple of months Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield (PWLF) will hold its annual election. As a member you, our readers, know that the Board changes half its members each year. We keep half the existing members and provide a chance to add new individuals to fill out the remainder of the board. This ensures a stable base from which to continue our work and an opportunity to bring in new ideas.

At the annual meeting in July, our current president, David Pitchford, indicated his intention to remain on the board for the second year of his two-year term but his disinclination to serve as President after April 2006. Additionally, current board members Corrine Frisch, Bill Jarrico, Siobhan Pitch-

ford, and Vicki Bamman will finish their two-year terms. This means that you have the option of putting your name in the hat or staying in the shadows.

What does it mean to step into the light of PWLF leadership? It means challenging yourself to step outside your lonely writer's comfort zone; being willing to spend your time and energy promoting the literary arts, working to increase awareness and support for them in your community and the surrounding area. A board member typically spends one evening a month at a board meeting, two or more hours a month writing articles for PenChant, and hopefully one or two Wednesday nights at IMO's for the regular open mics. Additional duties may include serving as editor of PenChant, send-

(Continued on page 5)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

I Resolve	2
Writing Resolution	2
Calendar Pages	3-4
I Resolve	5
Where?	5
NTM Reminder	5
A Word or Two	6
Events at a Glance	6
Classifieds	6

A WORD OR TWO (OR THREE)

By: Vicki Bamman

The week before Christmas, I went to the dentist and got my teeth cleaned. While I was in the waiting room, I heard someone ask, in all seriousness, if she could have a toothcomb instead of a toothbrush. She had toothbrushes but had never even seen a toothcomb and wondered what it was like. The same day, I picked up a library book by Charlene Harris called *Dead As A Doornail*. And then someone mentioned being on tenterhooks about the holidays. Three words in one day, all of them in commonly used expressions, and no one I talked to knew what those

words meant. They are the subject of this column.

First, the toothcomb is not a toothcomb, nor, as it is sometimes called, a fine toothcomb. It is a fine tooth comb, a comb with fine teeth. Most combs have two types of teeth: larger ones that are more widely spaced, and smaller ones that are more closely spaced. Those smaller teeth are the fine teeth. The ones they sell with head lice kits have very fine teeth, which are necessary for removing -- well, you know for what. Anyway, to go through things with a fine tooth comb, to search with one, means to look

carefully at every detail. Related to this is the expression "combing the area."

The doornail is simply a nail with a large head, used as studing on some doors. Nails are dead. Doornails, for all their prominence, are dead. Dead as a doornail means entirely dead. Deader than a doornail is either an exaggeration or a strong assertion that the thing talked of is truly dead. I just realized that if my cell phone goes



(Continued on page 6)

WRITING RESOLUTION



by: Siobhan

How easy is it for you to write your New Year's resolutions? Recently I was inspired to add to my resolutions.

Oh, I have the usual list – eat less, eat more sensibly (read: more salads, less red meat, and drink in moderation), and exercise more; but this year I'm adding at least one more. My addition is to help more young people (and perhaps their parents) enjoy learning to write stories and poetry. This decision came about in this way...

I was approached recently and asked for help. The child of a co-worker was writing a story and was having difficulty organizing his thoughts. He had lots of creative ideas and kept jumping from one to another. My co-worker was becoming frustrated with her son's inability to complete his assignment. Her idea was that if she could help him find an opening sentence, that he would then find a way to bring his story together and

turn in the assignment on time.

I asked her to tell me the story as she understood it. She began to

She was delighted with the idea.

describe elements of the story, using her son's words. After listening to the bits and pieces of the story, I made a few suggestions. She had given me a few sentences that would be wonderful as opening lines. I explained to her that if she helped her child choose one of these sentences, I thought it would help him find a starting point for his story. The sentences were creative and would draw the audience in to where they would want to read the rest of the story. She was delighted with the idea.

I went on to suggest that to help him organize his story, perhaps she could print the story and then cut out each paragraph. As her child is a very visual thinker, she could put the pieces of paper on the table and help him arrange and re-arrange them until the story began to fit

together. I explained that in this way he could see the story come together and she could make sure it made sense. It was reaffirming to hear her express understanding for the process I'd explained.

After our conversation I spent time thinking about what had happened. I felt I had made a positive impact on the relationship between mother and son and helped them both be successful and enjoy the project. I realized that what I had suggested to this young mother was similar to what I do in my own writing. Instead of erasing and re-writing, I occasionally cut apart the paragraphs or lines of a poem and then put them back together until my story or poem makes sense – to me.

I look forward to hearing about the success of this child's story and reading the final version. And I look forward to finding more opportunities like this in the coming year.

I RESOLVE . . . NOT TO MAKE ANY RESOLUTIONS UNLESS I WANT TO

By: Vicki Bamman

A few years ago, some friends and I realized that it was discouraging to make resolutions only to break them the next day . . . those failed resolutions about exercise and losing weight and watching less TV—made us feel so pathetic that we decided to make resolutions that we were sure we could keep. Someone resolved to set the alarm early and keep hitting the snooze button until it was

impossible to stay in bed any longer and still make it to work. Someone else resolved to eat lots of chocolate. And someone resolved to break every resolution she made, including that one.

This year my family has made resolutions with a high likelihood of success: Mike has resolved to go to work every day that he can; I resolved to read lots of books; and Pepper (the dog) resolved to spend

a lot of time on Mike's lap. She made the same resolution last year, and did pretty well with it—she never let the fact that he had a baby on his lap keep her off it.

We also made resolutions that are very likely to be broken, but if we can keep them—WOW! We've resolved to go to Tahiti with the friends who went with us to London in 2004. I've

JANUARY 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Open Mic @ IMO's - 7 p.m.	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Open Mic @ IMO's - 7 p.m.	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

FEBRUARY 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Open Mic @ IMO's 7 p.m.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Open Mic @ IMO's 7 p.m.	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

I RESOLVE

resolved to try hang-gliding or a similar sport, and while I'm at it, maybe I'll invent a time machine.

Seriously, the New Year, and any other time of new beginnings—important birthdays, for example, or the start of the school year—are good times to stop and take stock of what in your life is working and what is not, and make some changes if you can. Sometimes a small change can make a big difference. If you tend not to keep your resolutions, it may help to think of them as changes you're making, or simply a new thing you're trying.

There's a folk belief that you won't be able to sleep if there are dirty dishes in the sink. I'm trying out a new thing, making sure all dishes are in the dishwasher before I go to bed. Maybe it will help.

I have several writing projects pending right now. One requires that I consult professional journals in psychology, psychiatry, and child welfare. I have been putting off doing the reading because I don't want to go all the way out to UIS. But many of the journals are at the medical school library, and I

Sometimes a small change can make a big difference.

realized that I can combine my research with hospital visits, which I do regularly. That's another small change that I hope will yield big results. There is an established behavioral principle that linking a new behavior to an established one makes it easier to acquire new habits.

Then there are the things every writer has been told: *Have a regular time and place to write, and show up at the page. Write now, edit later.* I'm going to try it. I've tried it before, and my work life didn't accommodate itself to my "appointments" to write. I'm ready to try it again, recognizing that the likelihood of succeeding with this is somewhat higher than my trip to Tahiti, but a lot less likely than getting the dishwasher loaded every night. But if I do it, even once in a while, I'll be writing more than I am now, and that will be a good thing.

As a board member, I resolve to bug Bill Jarrico about keeping his campaign promise to write our bylaws in verse.

Hey, Bill!

WHERE?

(Continued from page 1)

ing publicity emails to the Illinois Times and Access 4, and/or working with schools and other arts organizations to promote PWLF publications.

What is your next step? Make the decision to toss your name into the pool of candidates. To nominate yourself or another member of the Forum, please provide the following in the form of a letter of nomination:

~Your name

~A brief bio of the nominee—whether you or someone else, along with a statement of what you feel you/they have to contribute to the success of PWLF.

~If the nominee is someone other than yourself, you must include a signed statement indicating that they agree to run and, if elected, serve as a member of the PWLF

board.

Nominations should be sent to: PWLF, c/o Election Committee P.O. Box 5666 Springfield, IL 62705 or emailed to prez@pwlf.com.

All nominations must be received by February 25th—postmarked not later than February 20th. Where we go from here depends on you.

REMINDER—NTM—HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT IT?

It just takes a moment to encourage a kid to write - talk to your own kids, your grandkids, nieces and nephews, the teens hanging around the neighborhood. Perhaps this is your New Year's Resolution. Give them the guidelines and ask them to send something in.

Guidelines

- Open to students grades six through twelve
- Submit one to three poems or artwork
- Include name, address, age, school, year in school, and contact information (e-mail or phone number)

Mail to:

NTM, P.O. Box 202
Chatham, IL 62629

e-mail to:

navigatingthemaze@yahoo.com

Submission deadline is Friday, March 3, 2005.



Poets & Writers Literary Forum

P. O. Box 5666
Springfield, IL 62705

Email: submissions@pwlf.com

If you are interested in contributing to the PenChant, please contact any of the PWLF Board members.

It is through the contributions and energy of all that we are successful.

Your Forum needs strong leadership. Please either volunteer or encourage anyone you know with administrative skills to volunteer for the Board. Let's keep the Forum thriving.

PWLF

To increase awareness and appreciation of Literary Arts



Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield

Calendar of Events

Jan. 4th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Jan. 18th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Feb. 1st—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Feb. 15th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

Last Sunday of each month—

Poetry Parnassus @ Joe's to Go—South 6th Street 1 to 3 p.m.



A Word or Two

(Continued from page 1)

dead, it won't be as dead as a doornail because it can be recharged.

Fine tooth combs are commonly seen, and doornails can be seen around town, if not in our own houses. Tenterhooks, on the other hand, are no longer easy to find, if they ever were. A tenterhook was part of a means of drying cloth. The tenter was a framework on which cloth was stretched so that it could dry evenly without shrinking. The frame had bent nails or hooks around the frame to hold the cloth in place—tenterhooks. Being on tenterhooks suggests being stretched and held that way for a period of time. The expression means being in painful suspense, or anxious.

It's mildly interesting to know what the words mean. It is more interesting, I think, that people continue using the expressions long after the origins have been lost, and those expressions still convey meaning. If I look for something with a toothcomb,

you know that I'm looking carefully. If I'm on tenterhooks, it's not because I'm eager and excited about what is coming, it's because I'm anxious. These expressions are an accepted part of the language but still may be considered clichés, and I'd challenge writers to come up with other ways of expressing the same ideas: it's deader than a roofing nail, deader than a tin can . . . lots of things are dead enough to fit. The others are harder: he searched with a . . . what? bug detector? (the electronic listening device kind of bug; the other kind can easily be detected in a variety of ways, and I will assert that if you think you have bugs, you probably do). Instead of combing the area, he vacuumed it? Instead of being on tenterhooks, she was . . . um . . . You try it. Let me know what you come up with. Next time you're on tenterhooks, think of it as a creative challenge.

CLASSIFIEDS

Poetry and Prose Wanted:

Information on deadlines and submission guidelines available at:

~ www.pwlf.com

~ www.pitchblackbooks.com

~ www.daybreakpoetry.com

Submit work today!