

The
Wow

e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

Volume 4 No. 1 January 2008

Telling It Like It Is

Once people find out that Ken and I are authors and writers, the usual response is “I have an idea for a book” or “I have a great story to share.” The latter is the most prevalent, and if you’re lucky enough to sit through yet another story (yes, we listen to LOTS of stories), you might just find that gem of a tale, one you could write and sell. Granted, the one telling you the story—the storyteller—is just that, a good talker. Most of the time, they aren’t writers, and that’s where you come in.



Dahlynn and her
grandmother DeEtta

In last month’s issue, we began adding a published Chicken Soup story to our monthly newsletter. In this issue, we’ve included a story my 85-year-old grandmother shared with me about my grandfather returning home from the Korean War. My grandmother is one of the best storytellers I have ever known and always tells it like it is (in a sweet and good-natured manner, mind you); when she told me her story during one of our visits, I instantly knew it was a perfect fit for “Chicken Soup for the Military Wife’s Soul.”

Never having touched a computer in her life, I offered to ghostwrite the story for her and submit it through the Chicken Soup story selection process for that book. She was thrilled with the idea, but insisted that I share the byline with her. Knowing

her stubbornness, I agreed to the dual byline. The story was selected for publication, and I added the dual byline; in Chicken books, they typically read as follows: “DeEtta Woffinden Anderson, as told to Dahlynn McKowen.” I invite you to read the story, which can be found on pages 3 and 4—I tear up every time I read it, and I wrote it!

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P . S .

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Telling It Like It Is

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In late 2006, we ran three newsletter articles that, when combined, will assist you in creating “as told to” stories. You can easily apply the lessons in these articles when creating a story where a dual byline is used:

October 2006 – Introduction to Ghostwriting
November 2006 – Interviewing Techniques 1A
December 2006 – Interviewing Techniques 1B

(These newsletters and other back issues can be found at www.PublishingSyndicate.com.)

Creating an “as told to” story is akin to ghostwriting the other person’s story. They have the idea, you have the writing chops. The story should be written in first person (i.e., “*I* knew *I* wanted to be a pro-golfer all *my* life,” not “*Joe* knew *he* wanted to be a pro-golfer all *his* life.”). Some research may be required, but the biggest hurdle is that you check your ego at the front door. You’re the worker bee, not the main attraction. Again, check out the October 2006 issue for more advice and guidance.

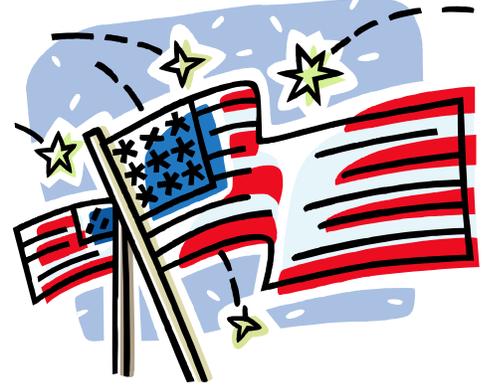
The other two aforementioned newsletters present valuable hints on the art of interviewing a person; in this case, the storyteller. I strongly urge you review these two articles before attempting to create an “as told to” story for Chicken Soup or any other publication.

Typically, payment for “as told to” stories in the Chicken Soup series goes to the writer, because the writer used his/her “intellect” to create the work. The “subject” (a.k.a. storyteller) receives no payment but a complimentary copy of the book. In my case, I received payment and put it toward several cases of the books that I sent to my grandmother to give away to her fellow retirement home residents. Again, payment to the writer is the typical permission release utilized by Chicken Soup for the Soul books and can be changed by the company for any reason.

So if you’ve heard a good story from a pal or family member, I urge you to pick up your pen and paper, or your voice recorder, and capture the story for your audience. In the case of writing my grandmother’s story, in her words, I’m glad I did; besides sharing her moving and funny story with the world, I was able to capture a moment in our family’s history for generations to come. 

-- Dahlynn

The following is from “Chicken Soup for the Military Wife’s Soul.” If you didn’t read this month’s main article, please do, as the writing style of the story below is discussed.



Welcome Home!

The day had finally arrived and my husband Andy was due home from a tour-of-duty in Korea. A veteran of World War II, Andy was a captain with the Air Force and had been fighting in Korea for nearly a year and a half. The kids and I really missed him.

Wanting to look our Sunday best upon Andy’s arrival, but not having the money to purchase new clothes from the department store for myself and our two young children, I scraped together enough material to make us new clothes. I sewed a cute outfit for our daughter Scharre, a jacket and tie for our son Bryan, and had just enough left to make myself a knee-length, white lace dress, just like a young bride’s gown. We looked spiffy!

At the airport, the three of us gathered with the other families waiting for husbands, fathers, brothers, and friends. Excitement filled the large air-hanger as the plane landed! Our boys were finally home!

About two hundred troops deplaned and instantly went into formation at the commander’s order of “Attention!” The men looked weary, tired, bedraggled, but from what I could read on their faces, they were happy and relieved to be home. After a few moments in formation, the commander ordered them into an “at ease” stance.

Before the commander could issue another order, I worked my way through the crowd, with Scharre and Bryan in tow, and approached him.

“Excuse me, sir. I would like to address the men, please,” I told the commander. Before he could utter a word, I faced the troops.

“Welcome home! Welcome home! Welcome home!” I said in a loud voice, turning in each direction with each “welcome” so all the men could hear me. “Don’t you look wonderful! We are so happy you have returned safe-and-sound! Thank you for your service to your country! Again, welcome home!”

I looked at the commander—his mouth agape in disbelief at my moxie—and thanked him. Taking the children’s hands, I rejoined the other families.

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Welcome Home!

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Still stunned, the commander squared himself and called his troops back into attention. After a very long second, he yelled, “Dismissed!” Not one of those two hundred men moved a single muscle—the entire hanger was silent and still, waiting to see which soldier would step forward to claim the lady in the white lace dress.

With his head held high, Andy made his way toward us through the frozen formation. Scharre and Bryan, recognizing their father, ran to meet him. Andy bent down and gave each of the children a big bear hug and kiss, then he proudly walked over to me. Again, the men and their families stood in complete silence.

Andy gave me a big kiss on the lips and everyone cheered! It was just like our wedding day with the guests waiting for that special closing smooch. At that instant, the troops fell out of formation, running to their families to do the same, with laughter and shouts of jubilation filling the air.

A handsome pilot had returned to his young bride. He was home, for good.

*DeEtta Woffinden Anderson
as told to Dahlynn McKowen*



Writer's Digest

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WritersDigest.com

A reader asked us what our favorite magazine was (notwithstanding Ken's woodworking and outdoor magazines), and we agreed that Writer's Digest is, by far, our favorite.

Now while this may seem like an advertisement for their product (yes, it's a free plug), we really do believe in the magazine's message. From the interviews to the tips to the weekly e-mail postings, whenever the magazine arrives at our house, we fight over who gets to read it first. The world of the word is ever changing, and even though between the two of us we have 50-plus years of professional writing experience, we learn something new every issue.

We urge you to visit www.WritersDigest.com or pick up a copy of the magazine. You'll agree that the cost (\$20) is worth the price of admission (plus, it could be a tax write-off!).



HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!

The following Chicken Soup books need stories from you!

Please submit stories directly to www.ChickenSoup.com

Christmas Pet Book: Share your holiday pet stories! Deadline: March 31, 2008

Basketball Lover's Soul: Stories of inspiration and resilience from basketball players and from the fans who love basketball. Deadline: March 31, 2008



High School Student's Soul: The high school years are some of the most difficult but, at the same time, some of the best. Deadline: April 30, 2008



Middle School Student's Soul: Stories focused on the middle school years. Deadline: April 30, 2008

Catholic Soul: An affirming collection of powerful and heartwarming stories and poems full of faith and inspiration. Deadline: May 30, 2008

Actively-Retired Soul: Just as the title suggests, there is no "retiring" after you retire! Most retirees are busier than ever and this book will share humorous and fun stories from those who are actively enjoying their "senior years!" Deadline: May 31, 2008



In 2005, Ken retired after thirty years with the California State Park system. Now he is busier than ever! Here's Ken and two-year-old grandson Jake mugging for the camera!

Go for it! Get published! 