

Postal Newsletter

Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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Communication: It's all about people

By Tony Carobine, President

What is the most read column in a local, commercial newspaper? That's a question I often ask participants at editor's workshops. This question usually generates a number of responses, such as: Dear Abby, sports, editorials, etc. Actually, the correct answer is the obituary column. Even though the reader may not know the unfortunate individual who passed on, this example demonstrates the interest that people have in people.

This same principle should be kept in mind when we prepare material for our publications. Union publications that employ what is called "member-oriented" labor journalism enjoy an extremely high readership. What is member-oriented labor journalism? Basically, it involves including the rank and file members in the publication; telling the union's story through the experiences of its members, as opposed to only a forum for the leadership to pass down information. By including the membership in the paper, by making it the "member's publication," two things happen. Readership increases and members are more likely to see the union as their organization and as a result are more inclined to be supportive.

In this regard, please consider the following:

- **A well-balanced publication should not only inform the members but also encourage participation in the union, directly and indirectly.** Careful attention should be given to how information published in a union paper is presented, and most importantly, received. Ask yourself: Does the paper portray the union as an "institution" or an organization made up of real people? Do members continually ask,

"What is the union going to do about this problem? Or do they ask, what are we going to do about this problem?"

- **Present information in a way that brings a "human touch" to the paper.** Including the membership will help over-

membership. People will respond and get involved when they have an understanding of what's going on and believe they have a reasonable chance to change things. Make the pages of the paper come alive by including real members and not

"Stories and photographs of rank and file members actively involved in their union at Stop Staples, plant closure and service cut rallies have become increasingly commonplace in many local and state publications over the past several months. Yes indeed, the union is made up of real people."

come the perception the union is some hard, cold institution located in a faraway place, but instead an organization made up of real people – members and officers alike. Using this approach is a step towards building readership and more union involvement.

- **People like to read about people, themselves first and others second.** By striving to bring a human touch to a union publication and including the membership, the paper becomes much more interesting to read and the union is less likely to be perceived as an institution or a clique being run by a few. The idea is to develop the paper into a forum for an exchange of ideas and a place to share the experiences of members not only at work, but in other aspects of their lives as well. By employing this practice, readership will increase and members will more likely see the union as their organization.

- **Effective union education and communication means using as much available space as possible to reflect the experiences and voices of the union**

just a place to pass down information from officers.

Following are some member-oriented labor journalism ideas for your publication. Keep in mind that when readers pick up a publication, the first thing they look for is their favorite column. Therefore, any column that is devoted to people will become the favorite column of many of your readers. They will open the publication to find it. An added caveat is that once you've gotten them into the publication, it's likely they will stay and read more.

Presenting the news

Reporting on union activities and happenings in the post office can also be done in a way that brings a human touch to this important news and demonstrates that the union is actually made up of real people. **(Stories and photographs of rank and file members actively involved in their union at Stop Staples, plant closure and service cut rallies have become increasingly commonplace in many local and**

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This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.



Located a couple of blocks from the state capital building in Madison, Wisconsin is The Madison Concourse Hotel, site of the biennial PPA Conference on August 20-22. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 19. The room rate is \$134 per night, single or double occupancy. Room reservations can be made through the PPA website at www.apwupostalpress.org or by calling the hotel at 1-800-356-8293.

Plans progress for August PPA Conference

On August 20-22, APWU editors, associate editors and officers will meet in Madison, Wisconsin for the 2015 biennial conference of the APWU National Postal Press Association. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 19. Established in 1967, this event is part of the PPA's mission; helping communicators fulfill their responsibilities of informing the membership of the American Postal Workers Union.

Led by a group of talented instructors, the intensive four-day program will cover a variety of communication-related topics and will be helpful to everyone; from novice to experienced, to local or state organizations that are interested in establishing (or re-establishing) a communications program for its membership.

In addition to nine workshops, the gathering will include three general sessions and an awards banquet.

The conference will be held at the The Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin. The room rate is \$134 per night, single or double occupancy. This rate is valid throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 14.5%. The hotel will provide free ground transportation from the airport, free Internet access in all guest-rooms and a reduced parking rate of \$7 per night. For more information about The Madison Concourse Hotel or to make room reservations, please visit the PPA website, www.apwupostalpress.org or call hotel reservations at 1-800-356-8293.

For the seventh consecutive conference the registration fee will be \$160. This fee includes conference materials, workshops, refreshment breaks, buffet dinner reception, and awards banquet.

To bug or not to bug – that really is no question!

By Lance Coles, Editor-at-Large

“...I promise to purchase only union made articles whenever available...”

These words are taken out of the official APWU oath of office.

This is where the union “bug” or union label comes in.

A union label or bug is the mark or emblem that shows that a product or service is made or provided by employees who are represented by a union.

The “bug” got its name because of the minuscule size of the image that is usually oval shape and contains the union and local number.

The invention of the union label or bug goes back to 1869, when the Carpenter’s Eight-Hour League in San Francisco adopted a stamp for use on products produced by factories employing men on the eight-hour day – as opposed to the 10 hour day.

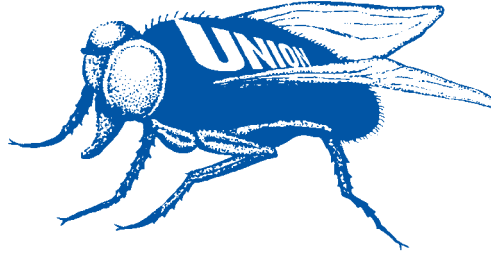
Using the union label as a tool for garnering support of the working class worked well and the cigarmakers were the first to adopt the national union label in 1880. Other unions also adopted in the 1880’s were typographers, garment workers, coopers, bakers and iron molders. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) created its Union Label Department in 1909.

Today the bug or union label signifies that all operations in that product or service was done by union members of a local union that belongs to a specific union or “Allied Printing Trades Council.”

The Allied Printing Trades Council is an international body made up of regional councils from the United States and Canada. Graphic Communications Conference (GCC [Teamsters] formerly the Graphic Communications International Union GCIU) and the printing, publishing and media sector locals of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) are the two main unions that make up the Allied Printing Trade Council.

Too many unions say they can’t afford to use a union printer. That is not an excuse – remember the oath! Too many locals copy their publications on their in-house copier. Sit down and figure out what that process is really costing you. There is the cost of the paper, the ink, the service contract, the lease or purchase of the copier, your time,

and the cost of actual printing each that is charged to the local. Sit down and do the math on this – you will be surprised.



I would wager that a union print shop is cheaper, or close in cost.

If the excuse is that it is cheaper to print

in-house on a copier, then how far away are we from these union sisters and brothers from using Staples and Walmart as their post office, because it is cheaper or easier?

We have an oath and an obligation to support and purchase union made products. If we don’t support each other, we will soon all be gone.

The AFL-CIO Union Label Department has listings of union printers, as does many unions and locals on their web pages. The Postal Press Association will also assist anyone who is looking for a union printer in their area, or one that will work for them.

Buy your insurance policy now

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

In August, the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association will hold its biennial conference in Madison, Wisconsin. This event will bring together many APWU communicators from around the country who have varying levels of experience with publishing union newsletters; from the seasoned editor to the new editor. However, some of our editors will remain at home for one reason or another and our entire union could suffer great harm because of it.

Our editors are a major link in the educational chain of our union. They are the lifeline between the union leadership and the rank and file members. They are the guardians of the written word. They are the protectors of good journalism and fair and honest reporting. They are the voice of local and state organizations. They are the voice of the members whom they represent. They are the protectors of proper grammar, freedom of the press and the legalities of journalism which relate to postal union publications. They should be the trained editors which our union needs so badly during these trying times.

Every local or state organization should find some way to finance the education of their editor through the Postal Press Association. Budgets should be set up which address the subject of editor training. Constitutions should include language that

provides for the editor to attend the Postal Press Association Conference in order to be properly trained for the job of editing the local or state publication which has been placed in his/her hands. Editor training should be a top priority for every local or state organization that has a publication for its members.

As editors we should take pride in our positions and have the desire to put forth our best efforts in performing the duties of editing. We should learn the necessity of obtaining instruction in both the fundamental mechanics of editing a newsletter and also the legal aspects of those things which go into that publication. We must relate the need for this knowledge to our members and our leaders so that they will all understand the necessity of being trained in this important position.

The PPA conference is just like money in the bank for our union. Everything we need to know to become more knowledgeable editors is there for the taking. All we have to do is be there and be a part of the conference. It is an insurance policy for our local, state, and national union in that the knowledge gained by our editors at the conference could insure the education of our membership. It could insure the addition of members. It could rally our members around our national union. It could insure us from lawsuits or election violations. Do we have adequate coverage? Plan to attend the PPA conference. Protect yourselves!

It's all about people

Continued from page 1

state publications over the past several months. Yes indeed, the union is made up of real people!)

Also, we often read about substantial labor-management settlements that impact the membership in a positive way. What is missing in most of these reports is including the reactions and opinions of real members as to how their union was successful on their behalf. Interview these members and find out how they feel about what the union did for them.

An article complete with quotes from some of the affected members brings a human touch to the situation while still reporting the news. And for the reader it says, "This is more than a settlement on paper. It involves real people that I know personally!" Plus, it demonstrates the value of the union.

Whether it's protests, rallies or grievance settlements; such articles become much more interesting when they include real people, plus it's a way to demonstrate the value of the union through the experiences of its members. The possibility for such stories is endless because conditions change on a daily basis affecting the membership. Reporting this news with a human touch is a great way to involve the members and promote the union.

Members speak out

Devote a column in each issue whereby randomly selected members are asked the same thought-provoking question. Publish their responses (and if possible, a photo of each member). The possibility of developing questions is endless; from union issues to management policies to community issues. This makes very interesting reading and brings a human touch to the paper, plus is a step to increasing membership participation in the union. Also, it sends a message to all members that their opinions and input are important. This may prompt other members to write a letter to the editor voicing their opinions in response to this column.

Personality profiles

Many APWU members lead interesting lives and are involved in various activities outside the post office. From volunteer ef-

forts, hobbies, to unique talents, the membership is a fascinating and diverse group of people. Articles of this nature make very interesting reading and recognize members for their achievements.

Importance of union membership

Many members (or potential members) are not aware of the importance of union membership, and may not realize that the benefits enjoyed today were not generously provided by management but were achieved

*When it comes to your
union newspaper . . .*



*Keep the 'people' in
your paper!*

because of the union. Articles of this nature can stimulate participation and bring about an increased awareness of the union.

Interviewing longtime members about how conditions were at the time they began working for the postal service compared to now is an excellent way to present such information. Most of these individuals have very fascinating stories to tell that will make good human-interest columns. Such a column demonstrates the importance of the union in the lives of members and again illustrates that the union is made up of real people.

Members or potential members are more inclined to listen to people they perceive most like themselves. In other words, they will listen to their peers more than anyone else, especially when it involves promotion of the union. Every opportunity possible should be used to promote the union through the experiences

of real members instead of solely relying upon union leaders.

Organization involvement

Some locals are involved in community efforts to help the needy in such ways as food drives, "adopt a family," working at telethons, etc. Articles highlighting these efforts bring out the human side of the union – people helping people; as opposed to "the only thing the union does is file grievances." An added touch is to interview members who are involved in these events, or even the people that are being helped to get their reactions.

Member only benefits

There are a variety of benefits and services only available to union members. An effective way to publicize these "member only" programs is to interview members who've been helped because of the union making them available. Again, such stories bring a human touch to union benefits and services, promotes the union and is something the reader can relate to and visualize as it involves real people – fellow union members.

Photographs

Just as people like to read about people, people also like to look at people. Including photographs of the membership in a union publication is another way to make the pages of a union paper come alive and show that the union is indeed not some institution but an organization made up of real living and breathing people.

Devising a plan

Developing ways to increase membership participation should be a priority of every local. How a member perceives the union can often be determined by what he or she reads and sees in the paper. Adding a human touch and devising ways to include the membership in a union publication may sound trivial on the surface but will go a long way to increasing readership and support for the union. The results may surprise you. Instead of someone saying, "What is the union going to do about this problem? They just might say, "What are we going to do about this problem?" Far fetched? No! Achievable? Yes!

New year — new opportunity!

By Jenny L. Gust, Editor-at-Large

How about a new year's resolution? But one that you can keep! Take a few minutes and pull out last year's copies of your paper. Get a cup of coffee or a beverage of your choice — I'm going with tea (it's too early for a margarita!) and take some time to look each issue over with a critical eye. Do you like what you see? Was your publication interesting, informative, readable? As they say, hindsight is 20/20, but you can make the choice to liven things up a bit this year.

Think about the purpose of your paper. Remember how important it really is! Very few members attend union meetings unless something big is happening that they want to know about. Even then some will be working at the time of the meeting or possibly sleeping depending on their tour. People have many home and family obligations — they just don't have the time to attend meetings. So your publication becomes their source of information. Most

people know they can't believe everything they hear. It is up to you to make sure they get the facts!

In this time of turmoil within the postal service your officers probably have plenty to write about. Try to make sure their articles read well and look good. How? Put in paragraphs where needed — it just looks good and reads even better. Subheads help also. Proper spelling and punctuation help. Use two columns — don't type from one side to the other. Don't type in bold or caps all the way through. Give the headline some punch to get people to want to read the article. Pull an interesting item from the article and put it in bold or a box to draw the reader in. Do you have a photo or graphics to go along with the article? All of these items are ways to keep the reader wanting to read every article!

Take a look at all aspects of your paper. Have you updated or changed your nameplate (also called banner or flag). This is the identity of your local or state.

If I looked at your paper would I know right away who this paper belongs too? I should and so should your reader! Have you updated the information in the masthead? The masthead identifies the union, its officers, and contact info, such as mailing address, phone numbers, email and website addresses. Many times it also has your local or state stewards/representatives information. Keep this up-to-date so members know how to reach someone for help when they need it. Do you print photos of your officers? It might be time to update those.

Remember that your paper is paid for by your members. It is supposed to project your union's image — strong and unified — willing to go to bat for all! We are in this together — we are a team. Together, as editors, we can keep our members hopeful, informed, and believing their money is well spent. Without them — we wouldn't have reason to be here in the first place. Happy New Year!

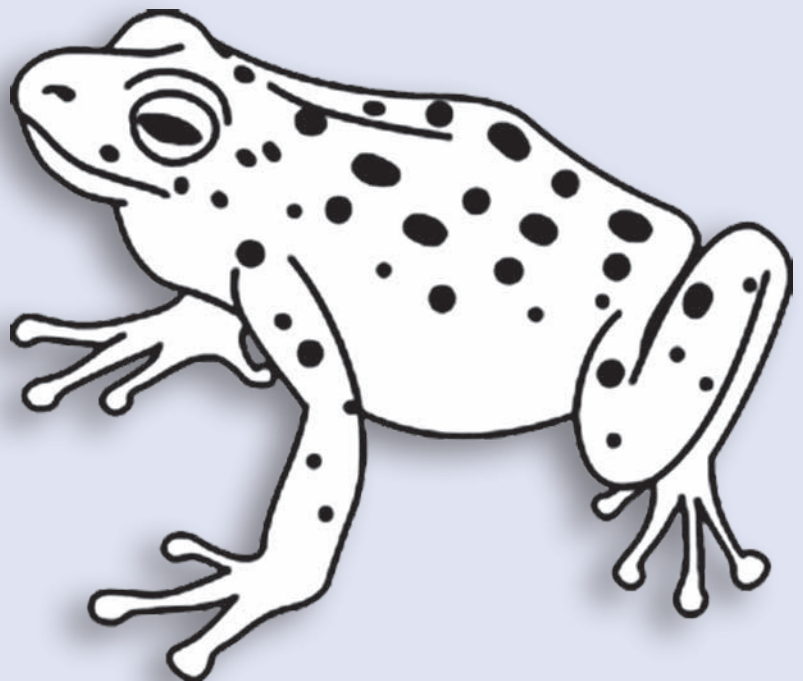
Building a 'do-it-now' mentality . . . how to swallow the big frog first

Teaching yourself to enjoy delayed gratification is a philosophy that can help you face up to difficult, unpleasant tasks and get them done first. Mark Twain said it: "If you have to swallow two frogs, swallow the big one first, and don't look at it too long."

Begin your day, your week, by tackling the toughest task first. It will make everything that follows seem easier and boost your self-confidence.

Some people take an almost perverse pride in being able to deal with the ugliest, meanest, most difficult things first. Most of us can improve our ability to handle the difficult head-on.

Remember, the real enemy is procrastination — which often is compounded by the time consumed in dwelling on unfinished work and unsolved problems.



Are you part of the solution or part of the problem?

By Hank Greenberg,
Honorary Member
PPA Advisory Council

There's a lot of talk today about union membership and the direction in which it is going. Everyone has the answer – and no

one has the answer. It's worth reviewing some of the problems in hopes that someone may come up with the solutions.

Everyone's fall guy is "apathy." OK, we agree that apathy is a major problem within the membership and quite possibly it may

be the biggest problem. But just saying "apathy" is not going to make it go away. For example, has anyone asked the members why they are apathetic; why they don't care; why they just aren't interested?

You can go into any post office in the United States and you will find members who are more excited about last Sunday's sporting event than what the union is doing to protect their job. Hey! It's your job we're talking about! When "the game" is over, you still have a mortgage to pay and a family to provide for.

There was a time when one employee or one office had a problem and postal workers all over the country rose up in protest. All too often we now find people saying, "Hey, it's not my office so it's not my problem." Forgive me, but I thought it is everyone's problem.

What am I missing? Where did we go wrong? Is it a general attitude in society today or just in the post office? Whatever it is time is running out and we need to do everything possible to get everyone to focus on the issues that we face in the days ahead.

It might be worth drawing up a list of questions and surveying the members. Put the questionnaire in your union newspaper. They don't have to sign it. (Give them enough space to vent.) We might find that "our" issues are not necessarily "their" issues. If this is true, then this will show we have failed to educate the membership.

Fifty-three years ago, I became editor of the Miami local paper. I believed then, and I believe now, that the local union newspaper was the single most important vehicle to educate the members and motivate the members. Articles about members, their opinions, their suggestions – gave them a sense of belonging.

If your local does not have a paper (or publish one on a regular basis), don't be surprised if your members do not know what's going on and believe every rumor they hear. You will always hear more dissatisfaction from people who are uninformed.

I congratulate every editor for the important work you are doing and I encourage you to stick with it because your efforts just might answer the age-old question: are you part of the solution, or part of the problem?

There goes the neighborhood

By Frank Antinone, Editor-at-Large

When all of you read the current *PPA Newsletter*; the change in delivery standards and 82 plant closures and consolidations should be well underway.

Earlier in December, 30 senators of the outgoing Senate, all but one of them Democrats, issued a letter to Postmaster General Donahoe urging the United States Postal Service not to move forward with its "network rationalization" program until the USPS has completed its analysis of potential impacts. The USPS said they were planning on responding to the senators' letter, but they didn't provide a timeline.

The USPS said that consolidating plants will help the financially strapped agency save money and adjust to dwindling demand for first class mail. Critics of the plan, say the program will slow down delivery times and harm the USPS business.

In October, the USPS Inspector General released a report saying the USPS was leaving communities in the dark about the changes and the repercussions that it would have in the community. The auditors found incomplete impact studies for all of the 95 mail processing facilities that are due to absorb operations from other centers. Despite the OIG's findings, the USPS insisted that it had fulfilled its obligations with the impact reports. Postal management said they have been transparent and that it began notifying customers of the consolidation plans in 2011.

In their letter, the senators criticized USPS's initial studies, saying the language in the reports was "so vague and uninformative as to be meaningless

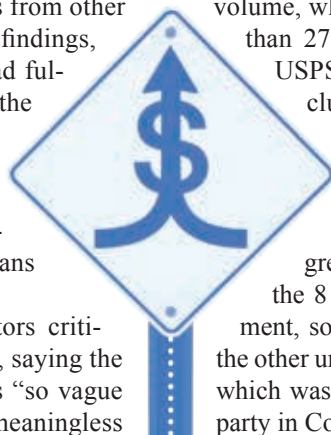
to the public." They asked the agency to postpone its plans to accommodate further analysis. "USPS gains little by deciding to continue the consolidation process on its current, arbitrary timeline," the letter said.

The postal service which has lost billions of dollars each year since 2006, does not want to delay the consolidations. Postal management scheduled its network rationalization program to begin on January 10, 2015 estimated to save \$750 million annually. Already, the USPS has consolidated 350 mail processing facilities and taken other steps to reduce costs since 2006. In the past 3 years alone, the agency closed 143 plants and eliminated about 3,800 routes in addition to reducing hours at more than 9,700 offices and trimming its workforce by 3,000 employees.

The next phase of consolidation will increase delivery times and eliminate overnight delivery for "a large portion of first-class mail and periodicals," according to the inspector general's report. A postal service fact sheet says the changes will only nominally increase the average delivery time for first-class mail, 2.14 days to 2.25 days.

The postal service's financial troubles in recent years stem from declines in mail volume, which have decreased by more than 27% since 2006. Some of the USPS largest expenditures include a congressional mandate to prefund retiree health benefits which totals about \$5 billion a year.

Donahoe has asked Congress to remove or restructure the 8 year old prefunding requirement, something that the APWU and the other unions have pushed for as well, which was never agreed upon by either party in Congress.



Attend the 2015 Biennial PPA Conference!

**Thursday, August 20 – Saturday, August 22
(Pre-conference session Wednesday, August 19)**

**Concourse Hotel & Governor's Club
Madison, Wisconsin**

A guestroom rate of \$134.00 per day single or double occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 14.5%. For more information about the Concourse Hotel or to make room reservations, please visit the PPA website, www.apwupostalpress.org or call hotel reservations at 1-800-356-8293.

This intensive four-day event will help you:

- Better inform and educate members.
- Create a communications program that will stimulate membership participation.
 - Rejuvenate your publication with better content and format.
 - Identify and correct bad writing and editing habits.
 - Master techniques for reporting on issues affecting the membership.
- Explore the subject of electronic communication and how it can complement a print publication.
 - Avoid costly lawsuits by studying the subjects of libel and copyright.
- Infuse your publication with style and personality so members will read every issue.
 - Harness the tools for conducting interviews that get noticed.
 - Map out ideas for developing an editorial policy.
 - Discover how labor history can be used to improve union involvement.
 - Acquire powerful labor/political cartooning skills.
 - Revive a lifeless publication by using new design techniques.
- Meet others who perform similar work and share experiences, problems and ideas.
- Get recharged and inspired to put dozens of new communication ideas to work!

All of this and much, much more!

Scheduling to meet your deadline

The biggest challenge most editors face is getting their publication out on time.

You are looking down the road – planning forward. You want to distribute your April issue on March 28. To make sure you meet your deadline, work backwards.

You schedule backwards from your deadline, not forward from the day you start thinking about the April issue. You want to meet a deadline of March 28. You start scheduling backwards, starting at March 28.

For example, how many days will it take for the printer to ship the newsletter to you? One day? That means it should leave the printer on March 27. How many days will it take the printer to print, cut, fold and dry your newsletter? Four days? That means you have to get the final proofs to the printer on March 23. How many days do you need to do the layout, check it and correct it? Seven days? Then you have to receive final copy on March 16.

Make sure everyone is clear whether the deadline means it's the beginning or the end of that day. And don't forget to factor in holidays and weekends. It can be a good idea to set the story deadline for a Friday morning. Then you can chase up the late-comers, giving them the weekend if they need it to finish their story.

Working backwards forces you to find out in advance from your contributors, and printer how much time they need to do their part of the project. That way there are

no nasty surprises for you. You won't find out a week before you're planning on delivery that your printer is going to need five days to do your job or is going on vacation the week you need the paper printed.

The backward schedule also gives you

a much more accurate gauge of when you have to start a project. Most of us don't allow enough time. Scheduling backwards forces us to be realistic. Scheduling backwards is the best way to meet deadlines.

—Adapted from CALM

Simplicity speaks louder than words

Following are some important suggestions on ways to write more effectively:

- First and foremost, think clearly, organize and plan ahead.
- Write with readers in mind. Give them information you think they need and want. Make things simple to understand. Develop a logical plot or outline – organized chronologically or by some other method – and stick with it.
- Prune away wordiness. Articles *a* and *the* are often unnecessary. *There are* and *it is* can lead to snarled sentence constructions; skip them. Instead of *in an effort to*, simply say *to*.
- Pare down sentences. Use connecting words *and*, *since*, and *because* sparingly. Make sentences direct and to the point.
- Keep paragraphs short, airy, and inviting.
- Use short, familiar words. Erudite words belong in literary works, not in publications for the membership.
- Avoid clichés; better yet, create your own.

- Strengthen verbs. Depend on active verbs to move your text along. Unless absolutely necessary, don't fall for passive voice, like *have been going*. Instead of *is indicative of*, say *shows*.

- Eliminate subjunctives. *Would have been* is an impossible mouthful.

- Stress positive. Instead of *It won't be here until Monday*, say *It will arrive on Monday*.

- Use headlines that tell instantly what the story is about and why the reader should want to read it.

- Use blurbs and breakouts – copy from the text that is repeated in **bold type** – to pull the reader along.

- Write catchy leads with anecdotes, quotes and controversy.

- Lean on the five W's; *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where* and *Why* to develop your information.

- Be human. Put inspiration into your writing so your readers can put themselves into the reading.