***Slate & Style***

A publication of the Writers’ Division of the National Federation of the Blind Summer 2015

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**Slate and Style Staff:** a team of dedicated members working together.

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**From the Keyboard of the President**

By Robert Leslie Newman

This is my last entry as President. I will always look back at my eight year run as the lead for this Division as a great experience. Though, as life will many times dictate, I need to give up my leadership role. I believe we have several individuals in place ready to take over and maintain the quality of membership benefits, and will make improvements for us all. I am one-hundred percent backing the new leadership and ask that you do the same.

Here I will not write a lengthy summery of my tenure, nor get into a big philosophical essay on change, but will say, “Hey, to keep an organization healthy and moving ahead, periodic infusion of new ideas, passion and personality is needed.” I plan to remain a member, and do a major switch over from manager, back to creative writer! See you all around within the division!

**On the Slate**

The new S&S team wishes to welcome all readers, old and new, to the reboot issue of Slate and Style. It is now a team effort made up of dedicated officers and members. And it should be noted here that there is always room for more team members. There are changes apparent in this first issue, as well as more changes to come in the future.

S&S will now be published four times a year at the seasons’ change. We also have a new email address especially for S&S submissions and correspondence. We look forward to hearing from each of you, our readers and division members. Please use this new option of communication to submit, ask questions, make requests and express your interest in involvement.

S&S is now dedicated to showcasing members as they are in all their glory and levels of writing skills. Though, of course, we cannot accept all submissions, we encourage all members to get involved. We want you, as you are the membership we wish to showcase. So be a part of the new roll out of Slate and Style.

Another thing to note here is that the formatting has changed also. There is an attempt to be accessible to all, so if you are having difficulty, please let us know. The table of contents is linked to each submission and if you are a JAWS user, you could use Quick Keys by pressing insert + z and then navigate by pressing b. S&S is in two columns, so arrowing down may be a problem at the end of a page. Just let JAWS do the reading. If an issue occurs, arrow up and press insert down arrow or 2 on the num pad. Enjoy reading what we are all writing.

**Coming Events**

Convention time in Orlando has some exciting things happening. Most importantly for Slate & Style to recognize is the activities of the Writers’ Division and its members.

The Writers’ Division Business Meeting will be Tuesday, July 7, 2015 from 1:00 - 4:30 pm, Salon 16, level 2.

We will be announcing the winners of the writers contest and the many upcoming activities, classes and services. We will also conduct business and elections. Come get involved, share and hone your talent. Bring a short story or poem to read aloud. Eve Sanchez, Chelsea Cook

“In Everything That Matters” There is one performance only of this radio drama written by Jerry Whittle, a longtime member and supporter of the Writers’ Division.) It will be Tuesday night at 7:00 to 8:30pm, Junior Ballroom G, level 1.



Come celebrate the NFB’s Diamond Anniversary by journeying back to remembrances of the golden age of radio. Listen as the voices of our leaders come alive in celebration of our accomplishments and embolden us to meet the challenges ahead.

All proceeds benefit the summer children’s programs at the Louisiana Center for the Blind.

The Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research will be putting on a seminar on How to Write a Pro*fessional Article for Publication in JBIR.*

Monday from 6:00 to 8:00pm, Salon 17, level 2

Learn how to write a professional practice article, and then work with Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research editors to prepare an outline for a professional practice article. Attendees should bring something to write with and a topic to outline.

**Seventy-five Quotes** by Myrna Badgerow

Upon a wall once barren and cold  
Now live words and thoughts and dreams.  
On meager cards, their visions told   
In pen and ink and dotted esteem.

Gathered they were over many years,  
Collected and savored within the soul.  
Bits of wisdom, they must appear  
To honor writers of truth and lore.

Seventy-five quotes in simple display,  
Yet their worth is not found in glory.  
Instead, it is shone in what they say  
As each is a fragment of wisdom's story.

Seventy-five thoughts I will never forget  
In quoted words and remembered breaths.  
Simple and complex, each different, and yet...  
They move my soul to its very depth.

**Time**

**(This is the first selection from my book The Truth Tree, a collection of short stories)** by Myrna Badgerow

He sits beneath his favorite tree, many thoughts filling his heart. Soon he finds the children of the village gathering around him. He is an older man by the measure of most, but in his heart he is young and in his soul he is wise beyond his measured years. He enjoys the company of the young ones and invites them to sit with him. After a few moments he begins to speak.

"Little ones, I wish to speak to you of Time," he begins.

"Time, Sir? What must we know about Time?" asks a wee little sprite sitting near his knee.

The man smiles and pats her head. "There is much to know but most you will not understand yet, and that is how it should be for now. Time does not seem important when we are young but as we grow older its significance is understood more clearly.. Time moves as clouds do. Sometimes it drifts slowly as does the wispy clouds of a gentle day. And then there are those moments when it races by as do the bold clouds of a stormy afternoon. When we are young we are as impatient as those bold clouds but as the years come and go we are content to drift with the wisps and let time be as it must."

The little girl looks puzzled, "But, Sir, why is this important to know?"

"Because, my child, every moment has a meaning, a reason and a purpose. As a young one, we do not often give our moments the respect or the care they may need," he replies softly. "We believe in forever and its promises. We have not yet learned the truths of life as our innocence is our guide. And it is that very innocence we must shelter." He waits for questions he knows will come.

Another voice is heard to ask, "How do we do that, Sir?"

"Ah, that is an easy question to answer. Always remember to stop during each day at least once and take the deepest breath you can possibly take. Listen to the music of life all around you. Touch wind and taste rain. Run through rainbows of your own making. Look at your world and gather those memories close to you. Dance beneath the stars and the sun. But most of all, show love to others. Let them see your heart and let them feel your spirit," he pauses for a moment.

"But what happens when we are no longer young, Sir?" the little sprite once again begs to know.



"Then, my child, you will have all these memories to soothe your spirit if it is tired and your heart if it is worn. You will know the innocence of your childhood once more, even if it is just for one moment. Our lives, our time, is never measured by a singular moment we have tucked away but it may be just one moment that reminds us of this. Never miss a chance to make a moment happen," the old man says as he rises.

His young audience rises with him and as they begin to drift away, he says to them, "It is time for you to run and play now. Make yourself a smile."

The little sprite turns to him, grins, and says, "And a moment."

The man sighs for he has just been given a gift to soothe his tired soul and his worn heart in days to come. He whispers his thanks to anyone who might be listening and begins to walk away thinking it might be time for him to run through one last rainbow, breathe deeply, and make for himself another moment.

He is not aware that others have listened to his words and hope he will continue to share with them all. He is not aware that his lessons have begun.

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**Myrna Badgerow** is a long time officer and an active member of the Writers’ Division and a valued member of the Slate & Style team. She always has a word to say and a way to do it. Living in Louisiana, she is a true Cajun cutie, born and raised. Her stories have inspired generations and will continue to do so. Being a friend to many, one could never be surprised at who they find showing up in her writing.

**Spectrum** by Chelsea Cook

Crunch through void.

Absolute zero.

We all reach the peak

And laughter warms the air.

Calibration commences

Team effort

Struggling...

Rotating...

Precisely positioning...

Optical observer is confident,

About besting the scope.

Dome acoustics.

Your friend is whispering

Far

and

Near.

Across the cosmos:

Right behind, ready to aid.

Cold deepens...

Search continues...

A different approach.

Observer's field.

A shout carried on the chill:

Success!

Cold irrelevant

In our joy,

Matters of magnitude

Becoming apparent.

We talk formation as we gaze

Brightness telling half the story.

Information encoded in light,

Verifying distance

Power,

Appreciation for explosions.



It is not about the view

From a dying star,

But what it does

To those still living.

Bring the Universe ever closer:

Feel frigid air,

Climb battleship stairs,

Dome disorientation,

Delight in discovery.

Experience the spectrum.

**Tree House Age** by Chelsea Cook

The tree house

The spaceship box

The loyal crew

Invincible, universal forces.

Why do they leave so soon?

The books, the music

That got you through dark times.

An idea that inspired,

Future projects finally realized.

Why are these dismissed?

When do you leave the portal?

You never do.

You "grow up" according to

Expectations:

A beach house

A watch of gold

A big office.

You work to please

The boss alone.

But does this have to be?

Return to the backyard.

Climb to the tree house

Build a real spaceship

Use your new books and figures to check and re-check,

And then ...

Take off.

**Chelsea Cook** recently graduated from Virginia Tech with a Physics degree. This makes her well qualified to write science fiction, which she has been doing since the sixth grade. Chelsea also revels in putting scientific concepts into her poetry. she has been active on the Writers’ Division board since high school. When not composing code or equations, Chelsea can be found under a tree with a book on a trusty Braille Notetaker.

**A Drop** by Eve Sanchez

The sickle warms and starts to drip.

A puddle grows with each drop.

Moving, it cuts a winding path

in the snow, traveling towards the sea.

Traveling further than one could see

through a land of eternal thirst.

The land denies its unquenched thirst

as it lets pass the traveling drip.

The dormant life lies deep where we see

not what is pulled down as drop

by drop. The connection to the sea

is made by a growing path.

Aspiring to riverhood is the trickling path

which deals with its own thirst.

Now a small pond seems like a sea

that continues coastward drip by drip.

Always more still joining the drop,

the magnitude of water, we begin to see.

Look to the torrent and see

the strength of the white water path.

Hitting the rocks makes a fan of drop

and foam. This continues down from the thirst

of the mouth which is not sated by any single drip

rushing here and there for that grand sea.

A lost one in a populous sea.

in every direction, it is all one could see.

They came from all over. Yes, each drip

followed a path.

Trying to sate a shared thirst

known long by each drop.

All the lonely ones that started as a drop

were now a collective called a sea.

For companionship they did not thirst.

Together they are much easier to see.

By sticking to their path

they became a cosmic drip.

All life is reflected in this lone drip

which started as a mere drop

following an Earthly path

and now orbits a celestial sea.

We look to the stars and see

with the same wonton thirst.

As each drip begins to drop,

it starts on a path to its own sea

and will be guided to see by its own thirst.

**Blurred Ink** by Eve Sanchez

The sign above the store front read “Heroes”, and as you walk through the doors you found an inventory that would not be out of place in a Post Exchange. There were all types of military regalia. There was clothing, boots and hats. There were pins, patches and emblems. There were two cases of military knives and one wall was covered with what appeared to be military fire arms. Upon closer inspection though, you would find that they were actually paint guns and air pistols that look like the more formidable counterparts.

Behind the counter was a young man and though he donned the shaved head that is commonly seen on many soldiers and Marines, the resemblance ended there. His baby face was highlighted by twinkling eyes and a boyish grin. He was definitely young and innocent. Even his voice was filled with the laughter of one who has seen no evil. As he rang up my purchase, I noticed a tattoo on his right forearm; two lines of text reaching from below his elbow to his wrist. I was unable to read it. “What does that say?” I asked.

Without a glance to his arm, “Fear not that which is just memory. Face life with bravery from this time on.” he said, “I got it the day I got back from Iraq. She used too big a needle and the ink is starting to blur.” His eyes momentarily fogged as his mind tried to see the unseen.

It was another day of patrol with his unit. “This isn’t a war zone.” he thought, listening to the children playing nearby. It had become routine to walk these streets with rifle in hand. Left, right, left right, left… All sound was lost in a deafening roar amidst a spray of dirt and stone that came from below. The intense heat rising up his leg was unbearable as he went backwards. Up, up, up, down, down. Landing hard, the back of his helmet dug into his head. He could hear screaming for less than a brief moment and then silence as all turned black.

“Wait. That was Johnson.” he told himself.



The convoy wasn’t large, but their presence still brought out a lot of lookers wanting to see the Americans. He was talking to his buddy while driving in the line. He laughed at how he still could not get a grasp on this damn manual transmission. As the road opened up, he pressed down with his left foot to gear up for acceleration. There was a horrible sound as he started to grind the gears, but it was lost in the sound of ripping metal and rubber as the truck was thrown up and to the right. He felt as if he was being peppered with debris and hot liquid that seemed to come from nowhere. The whole moment seemed to go on forever before he finally found himself lying on his buddy. He couldn’t see, but he knew they were both in bad shape when he heard what sounded like the entire convoy screaming and yelling. He closed his eyes and waited.

“Hold on. That was Malone.” he thought as he remembered the truck he drove was following some distance back.

It had already been a long day when they sat down for some lunch. One of the guys was passing out sandwiches from a pack. He put down his M-4 and took off his helmet. Taking a drink from his canteen, he raised one leg to rest his arm on his own knee. They were all thankful for this bit of rest from walking in the hot sun. He laughed as he caught a corned beef that was thrown to him. The guy with the food moved on as he unwrapped his sandwich and started to take a bite. He didn’t even hear the sound as he fell backwards and blood started running from a spot between his eyes.

“No.” He had taken a ham and cheese for himself. He stood there among the fallen sandwiches from the pack he had dropped. He stood there in shock, just looking at Carter.

“I’m thinking of covering it with something else.” he told me.

Recognizing the significance of the tattoo, I told him he couldn’t do that. “Just think of the blurring as symbolic as your memories of your experience also blur.” I suggested.

“Hey, I like that. Okay, then.” he almost laughed as he thought of this.

I chuckled to myself at how easy it is to sway the young and innocent. “I’m glad you came back.” I said as I started for the door.

The twinkle completely left his eyes as he said with seriousness, “Yeah, me too.”

**Eve Sanchez** is part of the S&S team and an active member of the National Federation of the Blind in many realms, including the Writers’ Division. Presently living in Tucson, Arizona, she is the matriarch of her family. Besides the importance the Federation plays in her life; animals, a variety of creative outlets and her spirituality are all valued aspects.

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**I****mprove Your Writing with Role Play** by Ciaran and Coal Corby

1. Writer’s Block Doesn't Block

There are many reasons a writer can be blocked but most of them can be reduced to one simple principle. For one reason or another there is no movement in the story. The plot can be lagging because we haven't figured out yet the important turning points. Alternatively, our main characters could remain inactive because nothing we could come up with allows us to showcase the various facets of the characters, superficial as well as deep.

Role play helps the writer to more deeply explore various plot possibilities as they're playing off what other people do and some of those things they never have considered before. Just as with real life and people, the characters need to be exposed to different situations so that they can grow, express themselves and respond to an emerging conflict in a way that essentially makes them who they are.

Their thoughts and feelings may not be always apparent to us right away, but the people or person we are role playing with is there for us, their character provoking ours through happiness, fear, intimidation or love. Whatever it is, it can take the pressure of an outside party to bring out the unique qualities of our character.

There are some writers who can be impartial. Stephen King or J K Rowling, to list two known examples, can kill their characters or subject them to utter misery. Their brutality easily allows for the plot to continue making them prolific writers. The rest of us may not be able to dispense with our creations so easily. Even if we don't think in those terms, we might prefer to stay within our comfort zone, with what we know.

The other person who plays with us through their character might have an entirely different outlook and their actions less merciful, forcing our character to experience the unknown and in the process of adjustment possibly to learn the painful lessons we might not have considered on their behalf if left to our own devices.

A dialogue or a setting might appear to be the manifestation of the writer's taste, and naturally that kind of fluidity is entirely acceptable if the writer can draw on inexhaustible resources of creativity. But when stuck, it could be hard to come up with the right kind of conversation or description.

Fortunately, role play makes such considerations irrelevant. Instead of carrying on your shoulders the entire burden of having to come up with new ideas, the role playing partners will contribute their own strength to the overall effort.

A dialogue can become the only necessary response to the words of another character. In a role play it would carry a definite function. It can express the feelings of a character, reveal certain bits of knowledge or merely demonstrate the nature of relationship between the two characters involved.

In either case, the function that is often clearly established in advance, pretty much dictates the entire course of the dialogue on both sides, with certain unexpected but enriching deviations occurring as a result of the character's particular inclinations.

If the character is introspective, the dialogue might include thoughts interspersing the spoken sentences. An extravert would find a way instead to express all possible shades of meaning through their words alone. For example, a character from the Harry Potter universe, named Kerstin Boxwood barely appears to think despite being rather intelligent, and so most of her dialogue would be dominated by the verbal component.

In contra distinction, the character Roland from Stephen King's Dark Tower appears to be more moody, sparse with his words, in a certain sense exhibiting the idealized macho man stereotype which suggests a different type of dialogue for him, only lengthy enough when he has very necessary information to divulge.

From these examples it is possible to see that both the structure and the content of the dialogue could be developed based on personal traits established by the character. Sometimes an overwhelming chore on its own, it becomes easier to engage in a dialogue and get to know your character better when working with a role playing partner due to the stimulating effects of their characters.

So when reaching for ideas, try the role play suitable to the development of your character. It can be a group specializing in the same genre as what you are working for, fiction based on a book with concepts inspiring you to write, or a world where your character can feel at home. Choosing your role play setting well would stimulate you creatively to the extent that you would know more about your characters at large, their strong and weak points, their interests and what would happen to them in the near future.  
2. Practice makes perfect

It is often said that a writer is supposed to write. Psychologically it might become overwhelming to keep writing every time. Even when you understand a few details that could still happen, the overall picture might escape, which in turn shuts down even the small bursts of creativity you had left.

Role play allows one to avoid that kind of pressure. You can keep writing every day, because you don't always have to figure out the overall picture. Somebody interacts, with you and you respond. Without any deadlines, or the entire plot line to think about, the process becomes more enjoyable, and easier to maintain consistently.   
3. Psychological Growth

Some writers find it easier to simply incorporate parts of themselves into the characters written. That is an acceptable approach. It can remove many creative doubts and make the writing go faster. But if you are basically writing some of yourself, you are also more likely to get bored at a certain point and would need tons of motivation to proceed.

That is the reason we favor an entirely different approach. After a while the characters we write gather lots of traits and preferences of every kind that have nothing to do with us. To be consistent with the picture we already established, we sometimes have to step outside of what we would normally choose to do in our lives. Thus, with enough background history, the characters gain their own independent existence and inner logic.

As the characters begin to grow, writers developing them might have to experience a situation through a different perspective. We would be forced to make difficult choices through our characters, and explore through them uncomfortable consequences.

Our opinions and understanding gained through practical experience could either be confirmed in principle, or be utterly shaken by the actions of our characters, if we allow ourselves to take them seriously of course.

As a result, our perception is able to incorporate more choices and our understanding of people around us grows, providing us with more coping mechanisms to deal with challenges than we imagined possible. Our characters may grow as a result of an intense role playing activity but so do we as individuals, so long as we acutely observe and assimilate what is happening to them.  
4. Problem Solving

Often role play scenes force us to plunge into an unfamiliar terrain. Our characters, however powerful they may be, are still prone to weaknesses and are forced to overcome their challenges. They may be assaulted by other characters with unusual powers, by an uncomfortable terrain they cannot control, or by situations created through their actions or those of their companions.

Sometimes the characters would simply have to accept their defeat as unavoidable, and that in itself contributes to their psychological growth, or to our own, as was mentioned in our explanation on psychological growth.

And yet sometimes there is also an alternative, it appears like the problem can be successfully resolved if only there is sufficient ingenuity applied to it. It may not be always clear how to precede right away, but treating the challenge as an opportunity tends to help.

After all, it can lead the character to seek out another character that specializes in that particular field, which may lead to the development of the said expert and further enhancing elements to the plot. Otherwise, the character himself could either procure or manufacture a device to help his self out, which aids the overall development of the character itself.

Sometimes even the particular nature of the setting can suggest a certain solution that would not be available in a different world. Magic, technology, or the particulars of science can all be utilized, depending on what we are working with, and gain us a greater understanding of that specific world.

Although role play enables us to be creative in our approach to the challenges inherent in our writing projects, its lessons can be used unexpectedly for everyday problems. It works like a muscle, growing in strength upon repeated usage. If you are a steady role player, before you know it you might be able to come up with five alternative solutions to a real world problem you would not have noticed previously.

**Ciaran and Coal Corby** have short stories of both horror and fantasy published in many anthologies, including Worlds of Fantasy Volume 1 and Through the Eyes of the Undead. Under the pen name Ishamael, Coal has several articles published in a Southern California newspaper, The Messenger, including a series of articles called Those Insightful Greeks. He also has tons of food reviews posted on Trip Adviser to which he has an extensive following.

Together they run several writing role play groups on yahoo including one for Game of Thrones, two for Harry Potter, one for Hunger Games, one for Wheel of Time, and two original games, one for horror and one for fantasy. There they have a blast writing with other published authors as well as those who merely enjoy giving their imaginations an extensive workout.

**Haiku** by Lynda Lambert

There is a poetic form called a**“Haiku.”**

It is a Japanese form that is elegant and so much fun to write. There are just a few rules for the Haiku and here they are.

1. The Haiku will have just 3 lines
2. The meter of the lines will be:  5, 7, 5 (Just count the syllables out for each line.)
3. Your Haiku needs to focus on a season. In our case, we will focus on Spring. You need not name the season in your poem, but you can give information and words that make the reader think of spring.

Let’s try writing a Haiku..  I would LOVE to have you send yours to me so I can rejoice with you in creating your first Haiku poem. I warn you, they are ADDICTIVE, and you will want to do lots more.  You can contact me by sending your poem to me at***:* riverwoman@zoominternet.net**

First published on Walking by Inner Vision; a blog by Lynda McKinney Lambert. Link to the original essay and poem: <http://lyndalambert.com/spring-haiku-writing-assignment-9/>

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**Some Haiku Poems**

by Lynda McKinney Lambert

**1. Wheels**

speeding frigid night

lonely dim crowded parkway,

solitary wheels

**2. Haiku to a California Mountain (from A to Z)**

awesome stupendous,

quiet dynamic glory

timelessness passage.

inspiring “Half Dome”

Yosemite’s kingly view -

verticality.

jagged mountain peaks

bathed in luminous vastness-

behold prescience.

breathtaking élan

aspiring to elegance,

zerophyte climax

majestic noble caps

ubiquitous and restive-

this wondrous zenith

omnipotent crags

fragmentary precipice

hauntingly quasi.

3. Spring Haiku

bright saffron flowers

disrupted crystal blankets

to announce, "It's Spring!"

**Lynda McKinney Lambert** lives in a rural village in western Pennsylvania where she writes poetry and Humanities focused essays, writes two blogs, and creates and exhibits her visual art in international exhibitions. She lives with her husband, Bob, 4 cats, and 2 dogs.

**Coffee!** By Heather Rasmussen

The dark, black liquid in the cup,

What one first craves when he gets up,

His dear, day’s dose of caffeine—yup!

Some drink it black with an iron will,

Some with it milk and sugar fill,

A few use Splenda or E-quil.

At first, most people hate the taste,

They quickly choke it down with haste,

But later learn that was a waste.

With flavor and pick-up one starts his day,

As each morning he goes on his way,

Three cheers for the stuff in the cup—I say!



**Heather Rasmussen** grew up on a goat farm in rural Tennessee with a love of the outdoors and reading. In college, she discovered that she like to write as well, especially science fiction and fantasy. She has been totally blind since the age of two. In 2014, she earned a Bachelor’s in International Studies. She is active in her church and does some blogging. Aside from writing, she also enjoys spending time with friends, tandem cycling, dogs, and Star Trek.

**Advice** by William L. Houts

Pour your cup of brainlight brave,

stagger down the hall becalmed,

and park it in that chair you style

for tapping true your poet's guile.

kiss the sun with syllables

as dolphin keen as Wallace words

edit out the killables

and rate your work as billables.

Advice comes cheap, so toss this note

let slip the dogs of fire heart,

and take your royal waiting part

as poet of the seeker: gay

as stars, and twice as bright,

as Adam naming Eden beasts,

O captain of the phrasing feasts,

you letter-light, you bard.

**Grail** by William L. Houts

It seems a nothing, this coffee cup, purchased

at our impeccable breakfast home. I'd always loved their mugs,

their  wide ceramic mouths and handles with their buxom hold.

And on my birthday unremembered otherwise my mother

gave one to me, with "Hob Nob", that haven's name

imprinted  on the vessel's side; so ennobled

by the heart and hand from whom it came it is,

ceramic chalice, cup and grail, it's sacred as the laughing earth,

and communicates my birth and homely history.

Such honeybee gifts, tiny wise, and splendid with trove

tell sagas of house and heart-minted gold.

**William L. Houts** is 48 years old and lives in Steilacoom, Washington with his sister, one brother and his mom, who is known to all in the family as "Nana" and increasingly as "the General". He has been writing for more than thirty years, but feels that he has hit his stride only recently. Dickie, his cat, loves his work but his sister, Taylor, doesn't know quite what to make of it.

**Stolen Innocence (DB 66943, 14 hours 6 minutes) by Elissa Wall**Reviewed by Shawn Jacobson

Stolen Innocence is the story of a woman, the author, who grows up in a denomination of Fundamentalist Mormons in which plural marriage is still practiced. The story follows her through her childhood as her family is torn apart by the stresses particular to plural marriage. It continues then into her forced marriage, at age 14, to her 19-year old first cousin. The author gives detailed descriptions of sexual and psychological abuse that leads her to attempt suicide. We soon see that she really does want to survive. Other suicide attempts by child brides are also mentioned.

The author starts sleeping in her truck to avoid her husband and is rescued from the middle of a storm by an ex-church member. She eventually leaves the denomination and successfully brings rape charges against her former husband.

Throughout the book, the author refers to her church community as “the people”. Indeed, this community is shown to have some definite strength. For instance, they come together to help each other when houses burn down. Community life is shown to have its joys, at least until the Jeff’s family leads it into a nightmare world.

This nightmare, against which the story of her life plays out, features Warren Jeff’s’, church leader and prophet, whom makes many predictions of the end of the world. He also makes repeated purges from the sect of those individuals who disagree with him. One prediction of the end coincides with the 2002 Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City. 9/11 is not sufficiently relevant to be considered worthy of a prediction of doom.

There are also extraordinary claims by the Jeff’s including that the father, Rulon, was resurrected into the body of his son. These claims are not dismissed out of hand. In this context, the author’s spiritual struggle, “Will I face eternal damnation if I disobey the prophet?” is to be expected.

Though this book is an indictment of child marriage, it is not an indictment of polygamy per se. For the author, polygamy is merely part of the background, a condition of life that can be handled with the right skills. Her view of plural marriage is much like the Federationists view of blindness. The disintegration of her family is depicted as due to her father’s lack of the peculiar skills needed to function in a plural marriage. He was not born into the sect. If this focus makes the book less useful in decrying plural marriage, it gives the book a more universal relevance allowing it to speak to the plight of teenage girls in a variety of oppressive situations.

This book deals frankly with marital rape and psychological abuse and it, at times, is an excruciating read. It is not for the faint of heart and is definitely not for the kiddies. Yet, in an age when teenage girls are kidnapped and sold into slavery, this is an important book.

**Shawn Jacobson** is an active Federationist locally, in the Maryland affiliate and nationally in the Writers’ Division. He works as a mathematical statistician for Housing and Urban Development and has previously worked in the same job position for the Bureau of Labor Statistics where he worked on the Occupational Safety and Health survey and the Consumer Price Index.

Shawn’s hobbies include reading, travel, and working on latch hook rugs. He lives with his wife Cheryl and his two children, Zebe and Stephen. He also has an increasing pack of dogs, Apollo, Penny, and Bruce.

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**Tech Tip: Writing Using JAWS and Microsoft Word; Shortcut Keys to Get Information While Editing** by Robert Gardner

Assuming you are blind, a writer, and using a computer, I would then assume most of you are using JAWS and Microsoft Word. And if you are a writer, a significant part of the creative process is to go back over what you have written and edit it. Given all that, below are some JAWS and Windows shortcut keys to help you edit your Word document.

This particular Tech Tip article will focus only on editing commands that give you information about your document, or allow you to read through your document in various ways. How you can make editing modifications to your document will perhaps be the subject of a future article.

Note that this isn’t a complete list of the shortcut keys that can be used in reviewing a document. Such a listing would run to many pages, and many of the more common ones are probably known to you already. What is given below are some of the more uncommon shortcut keys I’ve found useful, and perhaps they are ones that aren’t familiar to you. Note also this assumes your computer/laptop is set up with the desktop keyboard configuration.

1. Reading down a sentence at a time or a paragraph at a time.

I really like reviewing what I have written in this manner, and is usually my first step in editing a document. I like it much more than reading down a line at a time.

Read down a sentence at a time: alt-down arrow

You can use alt-up arrow to read up.

Read down a paragraph at a time: control-down arrow

You can use control-up arrow to read up.

Note that hitting those shortcut keys rapidly will allow you to run through sentences or paragraphs if you wish.

1. Where is the cursor?

Hit the NUM PAD 5 key to find where you are at.

1. Hear the spelling of a word.

With the cursor anywhere within the word, hit INSERT-num pad 5 twice quickly.

The INSERT key is the big key farthest to the left in the bottom row of the num pad.

1. Check the spelling of a single word.

With the cursor on the first letter of the word, highlight the word (CONTROL-SHIFT-RIGHT ARROW), then hit F7. The Windows spell-check will check the spelling of that single word.

1. The INSERT-f shortcut key.

I find myself using this often, particularly when reviewing the work of someone else. It gives you the font size, font color, font style, line spacing, and the paragraphing style. It will also tell you if text is bolded, italicized, or underlined, or if text is centered. All very useful information.

1. The INSERT-F1 shortcut key.

This speaks a message giving you probably more information than you really want. However, it does tell you how your margins are set, both left and right and top and bottom.

1. Temporarily change the speech rate.

More than likely, if you want to temporarily change the speech rate while editing, you would want to make it slower. To do so, hit ALT-CONTROL-PAGE DOWN. Obviously, substituting PAGE UP for PAGE DOWN would read the document faster.

INSERT-ESCAPE returns you to the original speech rate.

1. Page number, total number of pages, & number of words: INSERT- NUM PAD PAGE DOWN

The NUM PAD PAGE DOWN key is also the 3 key on the num pad.

1. Line number on a page: INSERT- NUM PAD DELETE

The NUM PAD DELETE key is the middle key in the bottom row of the num pad.

1. Cursor position from left side of page and top of page (in inches): ALT-NUM PAD DELETE
2. Where the Hell am I?

And finally, my favorite shortcut key of all, the most basic one everyone should know: INSERT-T. That will tell you the name of the document on your screen, and becomes invaluable when you’ve flipping between other documents, E-mails, and/or the Internet, and you’ve lost track of what’s on the screen.

If you have questions or comments, contact me at [rgardner4@gmail.com](mailto:rgardner4@gmail.com).

**SEASONS** by Robert Gardner

Spring

She ambled down the sidewalk, the world around her just beginning to turn green. The morning was unusually warm, and she’d convinced her mom to let her wear shorts outside for the first time that spring. Then she stopped. Someone was moving in, three houses down.

She gawked at the disarray on the front lawn of the house: bicycles, a table with stacked chairs, a sofa, several easy chairs, boxes of all sizes. No one seemed to be around. She slipped through the open gate in the chain link fence to inspect more closely.

A thunking sound came from the driveway around the side of the house. She rubbed the back of her hand over her nose, sniffled, then weaved her way through the maze of household goods to investigate. She saw a brown-haired boy about her own age. He wore jeans and a red soccer shirt, and he was throwing a tennis ball against the garage door. The ball would hit the garage door with a hollow thump, bounce off the driveway, then the boy would catch it. He glanced at her, but continued his routine with the ball as though she wasn’t there.

“Hi,” she said. She wiped her runny nose on the sleeve of her T-shirt.

“Hi,” the boy answered, not turning around or stopping his play.

She watched him throw and catch two more times. “My name’s Jessica,” she finally said.

The boy didn’t reply. The ball bounced, he caught it, then he hurled it back at the garage door once more.

“I live down the street,” she said, tugging up her drooping shorts. “I’m nine.” Her eyes never left him.

He half-turned, now bouncing the ball off the concrete in front of him. “I’m Steven. We’re from Mendota.”

“I don’t know where that is.”

“It’s not too far.” He glanced at her again, but seemed more interested in the tennis ball.

Jessica watched him and sniffed again. “I got a cold.”

“I’m in third grade,” the boy said.

Jessica brightened. “Me too.” After a moment she asked, “You want to play or something?”

“Naw.” He bounced the ball hard on the driveway, then caught it on the way down. “I got to help move things in. Mom and Dad went to get donuts somewhere.”

“I live down there.” She pointed. “The blue house. Can you come down sometime?”

“I don’t know.”

Jessica wiped at her nose, following his play with the ball.

Steven eyed her sideways. “You look like a boy.”

“My mom likes my hair short,” she said, sniffling. For a second, his gaze met hers. “Your eyes are green,” she blurted.

“Yeah.” He whirled and threw at the garage door. The tennis ball clunked, bounced, and he scrambled to his left to catch it.

“I got to go,” Jessica said, watching him wind up for another throw. “Bye.”

The ball again hit the garage door and bounced, but Steven spun around, letting it roll away. He looked straight at her. “Maybe I can come down later.”

Summer

She skipped out of the supermarket into the sticky heat of the July afternoon. With sandals slapping, a single plastic bag dangling from her hand, she scurried down the aisle of the parking lot toward her car. She kept her head down against the glare of the sun, her long chestnut hair falling into her face.

“Hi, Jess.” The voice, low and ahead, was that of a young man.

She jerked her head up, automatically brushing aside her hair. “Steve!”

“Hi. How you doing?”

“Oh, Steve,” she moaned, tugging at her shirt.

“What’s wrong?”

“I look terrible. All this time, and now all I have on is this old top and these ratty cutoffs.”

He smiled at her, perspiration already wetting his brow. “You look great, Jess.”

She bit her lip and lowered her head.

“Nobody’s going to think you’re a boy anymore. Remember how I used to tease you about that?”

She looked up and her voice trembled. “I’m sorry, Steve. You know, about . . . everything.”

“I missed your E-mails. You know, after they stopped. It got lonely over there.”

“I’m sorry.” She edged over as a SUV crept down the row, its windows up, the air conditioning fan under the hood whirring. “How long have you been back?” she asked weakly.

“I got out a month ago.”

“Oh,” she said softly.

His lips twitched into a small smile. “I thought about calling you. One of these days.” After a pause, he added, “I’ve been busy looking for a job.”

“I see.”

His smile twisted. “I thought being in the Air Force was supposed to open all these doors. That’s what they tell you when you go in.”

“I’m sorry. About not writing anymore.” Then she looked straight into his green eyes. She hesitated, then the words rushed out like air from a balloon. “I’m getting married, Steve. In five weeks. August 16th.”

His eyes stayed locked with hers. He seemed to be holding his breath. At last, he said, “I guess four years is a long time.”

Jessica was wet with perspiration. She forced a smile. “Aren’t you going to congratulate me?”

“Congratulations.” His sports shirt was damp, his posture not quite as erect as before. “Is it anybody I know?”

“No.”

“I guess it’s good I didn’t call. That wouldn’t be exactly right, now.”

Her voice was tiny. “You could call. Like an old friend, you know.”

“Yeah, sure.”

Jessica wiped the sweat out of her eyes and tightened her grip on the plastic bag. She again lowered her head. “I’m sorry,” she whispered.

Autumn

“I’ll take a glass of white zin,” she half-yelled at the bartender. With all the shouting around the bar, with the music blasting in from the adjacent hall, she was amazed he could hear her at all.

A body brushed lightly against her as another person wedged their way through the throng. “Hi, Jess,” a man said in her ear.

She turned her head, blinked, then smiled. “Hello, Steve. I figured you’d be here.” She took in the growing softness of his face, his thinning and unkempt hair, his necktie askew. She put a hand on his sleeve. “It’s been a while. How are you?”

“Let me get another drink,” he said. The slight slur in his words was obvious even in the flood of noise. “Then let’s go back there and talk.” He indicated the rear of the barroom.

Over her protests, he paid for her wine, then led her back to a table for two. As they sat down, he said, “Five years. I only get to see you like this every five years. You know, at the reunions.”

Jessica faltered, then put on a smile. “Can you believe it?” she said, her tone light. “Twenty-five years. It seems like high school was just yesterday.” Sitting there knee to knee with him, her breathing quickened.

Stephen stirred the ice in his 7-7. When he spoke, his voice was mushy, his head still down. “Who ever thought up this idea of having a reunion this time of year?”

“I thought it was rather clever. October can be such a beautiful time of year around here. It turned out to be a great fall weekend for those who’ve moved out of the area.”

Stephen looked up. “I like your dress. You’re still a looker, Jess.”

“It’s . . . good to see you too, Steve.”

“You and George?”

“Things are fine. We just celebrated twenty-one years. Amy, our youngest, graduated this year and has started at Western. She plans on majoring in physical education.”

“I saw that in the paper.” He took a swig of his whiskey. “About her graduating.”

Jessica sipped her wine. “And you?” she asked cautiously.

“Pat and I got divorced. I figured you knew that. It was final last April.”

She nodded, having known.

“I’m living with this great gal. Her name is Jean.” He waved a hand toward the main room where music from their teenage years was blaring. “She’s out there at our table. I’ll introduce you.”

“That would be nice.”

He lowered his head again, letting out a sobbing breath. “Pat was my third. What’s wrong with me, Jess?”

She swallowed. “There’s nothing wrong with you, Steve.”

He gulped at his drink. “I’ve got a nothing job, Jess,” he slurred, his voice quavering. “I’ve got three marriages behind me. I got two kids, and they don’t give a damn if I’m dead or alive.” His eyes teared as he gazed into her face. “I wanted it to be so different.”

Jessica lowered her head, pretending to play with her wine glass. She’d known all that. All of it.

“What’s wrong with me, Jess?”

She started to reach for his hand, stopped, then stood up. “Let’s go on out, okay?” Her own voice was unsteady. “I want you to meet George again.”

Winter

Jessica entered the hospital room, then jolted to a stop at the sight of him. He lay there on his back, his eyes closed. He could have been sleeping, but she knew he wasn’t.

“Let me take your coat,” the older of the two nurses whispered to her.

Mechanically, Jessica jammed her gloves and scarf into the pockets of the heavy coat, then handed it to the woman. The nurses all looked so young, she thought, pushing a strand of gray hair back in place and straightening her glasses.

The other nurse bent over Steven. Snakes of tubes and wires connected him to life support equipment. A heart monitor beeped in the corner; the smell of antiseptic hung in the background.

The first nurse, the obvious senior of the two, said to Jessica, “Thank you for coming. I know you had to come a long way, but he gave us a written request when he was admitted. His instructions were to call you when we thought it was appropriate.”

“It’s okay,” Jessica replied. “I want to be here. We’ve been friends for a long time.” She looked down at her hands, bone-thin and arthritic. “A very long time.”

“You must have come straight here?”

“Yes, As soon as I got the call. But it was a struggle. We couldn’t get flights yesterday, but we finally left Orlando late this morning. Then, when we transferred planes at O’Hare, we had a long layover due to the weather. But we finally got here and came straight from the airport.” She glanced at a clock on the console next to the bed. The time was 11:27 P.M.

“I’m afraid,” the nurse whispered with sympathy, both sincere and practiced, “that Steven slipped into a coma this morning. I doubt you’ll be able to talk with him. I’m so sorry.”

Jessica swallowed. “I understand.”

“We’ll leave you alone,” the older nurse said, still whispering.

“Where is the family? Are they here somewhere?”

The nurse met her gaze. “I’m not sure.”

Jessica averted her eyes. “I’ll only be ten or fifteen minutes. I know there’s really nothing I can do here.” Her voice cracked. “And I’m not sure I can stand it any longer than that.”

The nurse smiled and patted her arm, then left with her companion.

Jessica stared into the slack face of Steven. Tubes fed oxygen into his nostrils, and some type of monitor was clipped to one ear. She stepped forward and took his hand, careful not to disturb the IV attached to his arm. His hand felt so warm, so dry, she thought. “Steve?” she said, her voice low and soft. “It’s me. Jessica. I’m here. I’m sorry I’m . . . so late.”

His fingers in her hand remained lifeless. His closed eyes didn’t even flutter.

She held his hand and studied him. Somehow, Stephen had been transformed to have the face of an old man. “Think of all the years,” she murmured. “Of all the memories.” Her lips started to tremble. She squeezed his hand and pleaded, “Steve?”

He didn’t react in any way. The ragged beeping of the heart monitor seemed to fill the room.

Jessica stood there for a long time, herself also immobile, his hand in hers. Finally, she leaned over, inches from his face. Her eyes became moist as she said, “I’ve got to go, Steve.” She kissed him on the lips, whispered in his ear, then straightened. “Good-bye, Steve,” she said quietly, then grabbed her coat and shot out of the room.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she picked her way across the ice and snow of the parking lot. She held her coat collar together and kept her head down against the biting wind. Ahead, the maroon rental car was a black blob in the dim light, the engine running to keep the heater going. George was inside, smoking cigarettes and listening to the radio.

“So?” he asked as she jumped in.

“I said good-bye.”

George grunted. He turned off the radio, put the car in gear, then crunched slowly through the parking lot toward the street. “Jeez,” he said, “am I glad we left all this snow and crap behind.”

Jessica huddled against her door and remained silent. She sniffled, her nose curling against the cigarette smoke. Removing her glove, she wiped away the condensation on her window and peered out.

George glanced at her as he pulled out onto the street. “This was a long way to come, just for that.”

“We can see the grandkids,” she said, snuffling.

They drove on without speaking. They passed endless houses, darkened in the middle of the winter night. Streetlights slid by in rhythmic intervals, the only guardians against the blackness of the world around them. George exhaled smoke, his eyes on the street ahead. When he broke the silence, his voice was dispassionate. “You always loved him, didn’t you?”

Jessica rubbed again at her window and gazed out into darkness. She said nothing.

**Robert Gardner** worked his entire life after college as a mechanical engineer and is now retired. He lost his eyesight as an adult, but managed to keep working largely by becoming knowledgeable on the computer. He lives with his wife in the small river town of Hampton, Illinois, on the Mississippi. He became involved with the NFB fifteen years ago, and had published articles and stories in both the Braille Monitor and Slate & Style. His favorite genre for writing is short story fiction.

**What’s In The Picnic Basket?**

For your enjoyment, here is a sampling of sweet and sour treats to tantalize your tongues. Recipes contributed by staff and members to share with all.

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**Chicken Burgers**

Makes 4 burgers

Ingredients:

1 pound ground chicken

¼- ½ cups flour

Seasoning to taste; suggested salt, pepper and paprika.

4 potato rolls

Dill pickle slices

BBQ sauce, a tangy variety of your choosing.

Olive Oil

Preparation:

Prep by mixing seasoning and flour into ground chicken. Use just enough flour to absorb some of the stickiness of chicken. Shape into 4 firm patties. Drizzle with just a bit of olive oil so they do not stick when cooking.

Cook until internal temperature of 165 degrees is achieved. Or on George Foreman grill for 12 minute.

They keep well so, make ahead for picnic construction or enjoy immediately. Serve on rolls with pickle slices and BBQ sauce.

**Freezer Sweet Pickles**

Ingredients for pickle mix:

6 cups cucumbers, sliced thin with peel (or can be chunked or cut into spears)

1 cup diced green peppers

1 cup diced onion

1 cup diced celery

2 tablespoons salt

Preparation:

Sprinkle salt over vegetables in a large bowl. Stir gently to distribute salt as evenly as possible. Let stand 3 hours. Drain in a colander and rinse to remove most of the salt. Let vegetables drain fairly dry in colander (usually 1/2 to 1 hour).

In large bowl combine these ingredients;

2 cups sugar

1 cup cold white vinegar

1 teaspoon celery seed

1/2 teaspoon mustard seed

Stir sugar into cold vinegar until well dissolved. Stir in spices. Add dry vegetables and stir carefully to mix. Let stand about 15 minutes. Spoon into freezer containers (I usually used pint sized containers except for spears. I would then use quart sized.)

Make sure to distribute the pickle syrup evenly in the containers as well. Put immediately into freezer.

Will last 6 months in refrigerator and an indefinite amount of time in the freezer.

\*Best-pak freezer containers seem to work the best. Remember to leave enough space at the top for the liquid to expand.

These are a great accompaniment to sweeten your tongue.

**Picnic Potato Salad**

**E**nough red potatoes to feed the crew, this may be about 6 to 8.

And a jar of above freezer pickles.

That’s all you need to prepare.

Start by cutting potatoes into uniform bite size pieces. Bring to a soft boil in large pot with just a bit of the pickle juice added to water. When they are fork tender, drain well.

Except for the cucumbers, mix with vegetables from freezer pickles, i.e. peppers, onions and celery. Salt and pepper to taste and then chill.

This can be enjoyed at your summer picnic without compromising safety as there are no creams or fats to spoil.

**Carolina BBQ Beans**

Ingredients:

1 15 ounce can pork and beans

1 15 ounce can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

1 15 ounce can lima beans, drained and rinsed

3/4 cup ketchup

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1/2 cup butter or margarine

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup cider vinegar

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tablespoon mustard

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

Salt to taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Sauté onion and garlic in butter. Add ketchup, sugar, cider vinegar, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Stir until well blended. Pour into a large casserole dish and add other ingredients and stir to combine. Place in hot oven and bake for one hour.

**Fresh Fruit Salad**

A bite sized selection of all your favorites such as red grapes, cantaloupe, strawberries, pineapple chunks, bananas, and apples. If you opt out of using the pineapple, you will want to toss your apples and bananas with a bit of lemon juice to prevent browning.

Prep all of your fruit in a large bowl with a lid before heading out. This can be done a day ahead and kept chilled.

In a container of Cool Whip whipped topping, mix about 2 teaspoons of cinnamon and chill until ready to eat. Just before your meal, stir the Cool Whip into the fruit and serve.

Your friends and family will love it and will never know how simple it was.

**Honey Almond Sesame Cookies**

Ingredients:

¾ cup honey

¾ cup almond or peanut butter

¾ cup almond flour or meal

½ cup sunflower seeds

½ cup sesame seeds

¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350. Optional: toast the sesame seeds and sunflower seed in the oven for a few minutes, watch to make sure they don’t burn.

2. In a small saucepan, over medium heat, combine the honey and almond butter until well mixed and warm. In a large bowl, combine all of the dry ingredients and then add the honey almond butter mixture. Stir to incorporate well. With a spoon, create tablespoon size balls of dough and spread out on a greased or parchment lined cookie sheet. With a fork, flatten each ball down flat with a criss cross pattern. Bake for 6-8 minutes, but keep an eye out that the edges do not burn as honey cooks quickly.

**Lemonade**

Ingredients:

¾ to 1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup water (for the simple syrup)

1 cup lemon juice

2 to 3 cups cold water (to dilute)

Prepare the simple syrup by placing the sugar and water in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Stir so that the sugar dissolves completely and remove from heat.

Depending on the size of the lemons, 4 to 6 should be enough for one cup of juice.

Pour the juice and the simple syrup into a serving pitcher. Add 2 to 3 cups of cold water and taste. Add more water if you would like it to be more diluted, but remember that by adding ice it will naturally dilute the lemonade as it melts. If the lemonade is a little sweet for your taste, add a little more straight lemon juice.

Refrigerate until chilled.

**Inside the Dictionary**

The members of the Slate & Style team hope that reading this issue was not a lugubrious chore.

Adjective: lugubrious

Looking or sounding sad and dismal. Also, Mournful, gloomy, sad, unhappy, doleful, glum, melancholy, woeful, dour, Cheerless, joyless, dismal, funereal, sepulchral are all synonyms.

Now that you have a new word in your lexicon, try using it in your writing. If you want, share it with us, we will be the opposite of lugubrious to receive it.

**Let’s write the lives we want.**

Slate & Style is a quarterly publication of the National Federation of the Blind Writers' Division. It is dedicated to writing pursuits such as literary pieces, resources, and information about various writing styles. A majority of Slate & Style's contributors are blind, but we welcome submissions from any contributor. We also accept submissions touching on any subject matter. We encourage submissions from both experienced and beginning writers with our goal being to hone our writing craft and share our thoughts.

Slate & Style accepts short fiction, short creative nonfiction, poetry, articles discussing and providing tips for various writing styles including literary, technical, editing, public relations, and academic, literary criticism, resource information, and book reviews.

Subject matter is not limited but will be up to the editor's discretion to publish.

Slate & Style accepts material from adults and children. We require email submissions.

Below are some of the highlights for submitting. Go to writers.nfb.org/Slate&StylePage for the full submission guidelines..

Include an attached cover letter and a short biography. This should be no more than 150 words. Keep your bio to the key items you feel are important for readers to know.

Multiple submissions per email are fine, but all must be listed in the required cover letter. Use Microsoft Word or RTF. No other formats are accepted. Send all submissions and questions to [s-and-s@nfbnet.org](mailto:s-and-s@nfbnet.org).

Please read through all the guidelines carefully. Submissions that do not follow these guidelines may not be considered for Slate & Style.

Though submissions are welcome at all times, if your submission is specifically about a particular season or time of year and you would like your submission to appear in that corresponding issue, please read the dates and submission deadlines in the guidelines.

For the autumn issue, which will come out on September 23rd, the closing date for acceptance of submissions is September 2nd.

\*\*\*\*We look forward to seeing your words.\*\*\*\*