

The Worldwide News

PUBLISHED BY AMBASSADOR COLLEGE, BIG SANDY, TEXAS 75755

May 8, 1974

ALL MINISTERS ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE:

Greetings! This handout is to provide you with material which may be of help in preparing or helping prepare future articles for The Worldwide News. It is an advance copy of an article which will appear in a forthcoming issue.

Much of the material was taken from the August 6, 1973, issue -- but with important updates and changes. When we printed this material originally, there were only 21,000 subscribers. Now there are over 30,000.

The material on the following three pages will answer many, if not most, of the questions you may have. However, if there are other points you need to know about, or if you have contributions or suggestions, please see me at the conference or call or write to:

The Worldwide News
Box 111
Big Sandy, Texas 75755
(214) 636-4123 (WN) or
(214) 636-4311 (Ambassador College)

Thank you very much for your support of the paper over the past year. We hope we can continue to serve the brethren in the most effective manner possible.

John Robinson

ARTICLE PREPARATION

1. Articles, or "copy" should be double-spaced (typed) with a 60-space line. (This helps the layout staff compute how much space an article will take up before it is sent to the typesetter.) Articles should be typed on standard 8½-by-11-inch paper and should not be typed in all-capital letters.

2. Always include a by-line; for example: "By John N. Jones."

3. Always include a dateline at the beginning of the first paragraph of the article; for example: "DETROIT, Mich."

4. In the first part of the article, always include the date the event takes place.

5. The first mention of a person should include his *full* name and his identification. (Example: "Bob Smith, member of the Sydney church . . .") From then on, refer to Mr. Smith (or Miss or Mrs. Smith); refer to a child or teenager by his first name.

6. A good rule of thumb is to answer in your article these six questions: Who? What? Where? When? How?

7. *Always* double-check the spelling of names of persons and places. No one, of course, likes to have his name misspelled. This is a very important point. If at all possible, ask each person mentioned in your article to verify the correct spelling of his name. Also, if a person has an unusual name which may be mistaken for a misspelling, indicate that the name is indeed correctly spelled. At the end of your article, write a note explaining how you were able to check on the spelling of the names so the staff will be sure you have spelled them right.

8. In most articles — news articles especially — write in the third person; do not use the words *I, we, our, etc.* If you feel using the first person *is* justified, however, see point No. 9.

9. In first-person accounts, be sure you, as a participant in your own article, are properly identified. This may be done in the by-line; for example: "By John N. Jones, Cleveland Member." In some cases, an "editor's note" may precede your by-line.

10. Include the age of anyone you write about, especially when writing feature articles and obituaries. Unless you tell the reader, he won't know whether you're talking about a nine-year-old or a 90-year-old.

11. Remember you are writing for a worldwide audience. Don't assume your readers are familiar with anything in your local city, state or country. Try to put yourself in your reader's place.

12. In articles concerning your local church area or congregation, it is a good idea to ask your local pastor to look over your article before you send it in.

13. Make good use of direct quotations. An article submitted, for instance, for "Local Church News Wrap-Up" can be made much more interesting by including a relevant quotation or two from someone involved in what the article is about. Always attribute quotes and properly identify the person being quoted (see points No. 5, 7, 10).

14. Don't be discouraged if your article isn't printed. Since more articles are contributed than we have space for, it's impossible to print all of them, and sometimes perfectly acceptable material is not printed. Try again.

15. Have your article in the mail by the next day if at all possible, if you're writing about a news event, so the article can be included in the next edition of the paper. If waiting for photos to be processed would delay your article, send your article in ahead of the photos and include a note to that effect.

16. Send your articles to *The Worldwide News*, Box 111, Big Sandy, Tex., 75755, U.S.A.

The Worldwide News offers short course in journalism

By Clyde Kilough

"You'll run out of articles after two issues," warned observers in the planning stages of *The Worldwide News*.

Since then 29 issues have gone to press, one every two weeks, and any forebodings of a copy drought have long since been dispelled.

Reader response has been absolutely fantastic, and the *WN* has been inundated with enough articles, ideas and stories from around the world to keep the staff supplied with material for months to come.

As more copy is received from local areas, however, the need for consistency and direction in writing news stories becomes increasingly evident.

This consistency and direction have been a traditional source of trial and trouble for publishers. The late publisher and humorist Bennett Cerf told of one editor who faced such problems in sending a rookie to cover the famous Johnstown, Pa., flood.

The first flash of the 1889 disaster, according to Mr. Cerf, reached the nearest big-time newspaper office late at night when only the newest addition to the staff, a droopy youth just out of school, was on tap.

The editor hustled him to the scene of the catastrophe and spent the next hour in a frenzied effort to get his veteran reporters on the job.

By then, however, it was too late. All the wires were down and the valley was isolated. For 24 hours the only reporter in the devastated area was one green beginner.

The press of America waited feverishly for the lone reporter's first report. Finally it began to trickle in over the telegraph:

"God sits alone upon a lonely mountaintop tonight and gazes upon a desolate Johnstown. The roar of swirling waters echoes through . . ."

The editor tore his hair and rushed

a wire back to his poet laureate:

"Okay. Forget flood. Interview God. Rush pictures."

While it is a humorous exaggeration for effect, Mr. Cerf's anecdote is an example of what budding reporters sometimes produce in a valiant effort to write an interesting news article.

Like the reporter's editor, the staff of *The Worldwide News* has recently received articles which with a little help could have been much more effective and readable.

Since this is a paper for the Church and a growing portion of it is written by Church members, some basic principles of journalism, standard newswriting, technique and style will markedly improve the quality and consistency of the *News*.

The following tips are not intended to be used as the supreme source for successful writing; neither should they be considered the stepping-stone to editorship in the nearest UPI regional office. (Of course, many of you may never write more than one article for the paper.)

They are, however, pointers which if used will make your articles, and the job of the *WN* staff, much easier, more professional and more enjoyable.

Straight News

First of all, there are mainly two basic types of stories you will be writing: straight news and feature.

A straight news story tells the facts of the situation with no editorializing, personal observations or presentations of facts aimed toward a conclusion by the author. It's merely the recounting of the facts as they happened.

A feature, on the other hand, is a story which is often undated general-interest material written from a certain angle or point of view. Nearly all the articles in *The Plain Truth*, for example, are features.

There is a point to make, and the facts presented lead to the point or conclusion the writer wants to get across.

For *WN* purposes, most of the articles you write are news shorts from your area, and for that reason the primary concern of this article is how to write a news story.

Making Your Entrances

There's an old Spokesman Club saying: "By your entrances and exits are you known."

The same holds true for writing. If you don't make your entrance (the introduction, opening thought or, in journalism jargon, "lead") interest-grabbing yet informative, the reader will simply pass on to the next story on the page.

What technique is used in writing effective news leads?

Tradition has it that back in the U.S. Civil War newspapermen often had trouble receiving articles from their correspondents in the field because the telegraph wires were cut in the middle of a story.

They then developed of necessity what is termed the inverted-pyramid style of writing, which has since come to be the most used and most effective way of opening an article.

The inverted pyramid is "the mold that separates facts in diminishing order of importance," defines John Hohenberg in his book, *The Professional Journalist*.

In the inverted pyramid the most important parts of an article are at the beginning; they take the headline and attract attention. The less important parts are at the end, where they can be chopped off at will to fit the demands of space, time and editorial operation.

The inverted pyramid is formed by answering in the lead the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

For example, in the lead article of one edition of the *WN* the first sen-

tence read:

"ATLANTA, Ga. — [Who?] Herbert W. Armstrong arrived [Where?] here [When?] Friday, July 13, for [What?] a three-day stay [Why?] in which he was able to see a summer special campaign telecast and speak to 1,200 brethren at a combined Sabbath service."

How he got there — which is of lesser importance in this specific article — is mentioned two sentences later.

For variety and interest you may wish to open with quotes, questions or striking statements, but the thing to remember is to put the main information in the beginning and quickly answer the six questions.

Look through and study articles written by major news services such as the Associated Press, United Press International or Reuters; notice how various leads are written and try to incorporate these ideas into your next article.

By the way, when you reach the conclusion of your news story, simply stop. As mentioned earlier, you're known by your exits too, and a weak conclusion can leave a bad taste from an otherwise interesting article. There's no need for summaries, recapitulations, onward-and-upward exhortations or "A good time was had by all."

Short and Sweet

How long should a news article be?

According to one modern axiom: "like a skirt — short enough to be interesting but long enough to cover

the subject."

Many articles are received that cover the subject in great detail but are so long they kill any interest for the reader. They must be drastically edited because of overwriting.

The feelings of the *WN* staff are best summed up by Hohenberg, whose advice is to "adhere to the one rule that will never make trouble for any journalist: 'Keep it short!'"

Pick the Right Words

One reason articles often turn out too long and uninteresting is choice of wording and phrasing. This is where building a strong vocabulary will greatly improve one's writing.

Strike out the trite, say-nothing phrases and dull, passive expressions and replace them with words and expressions that will enable you to say what you mean in a more succinct, clear, striking manner.

A large vocabulary storehouse of common, understandable words is desired much more than complex, hard-to-pronounce, highfalutin, pedantic locution.

Ready to Write

Now that you're organized and have built a smashing vocabulary and incorporated various other subtle techniques into your style, it's time to sit down and write.

You have to write smoothly to be read smoothly, and the best way to do that is just to sit down and write your article straight through without stopping to labor over wording and sentence structure.

After you've done so, then go back

and clean it up. This will produce a smooth-talking effect which is much easier to read.

Sometimes a story can be too good. A writer struggling for a great lead, an impressive string of words or catchy sentence structure will strain for effect and will come up with nothing but an awkward, bulky article.

A point to remember is, just sit down and write as you talk; then doctor it up.

The Key to It All

No matter how many books you read on the subject or how much instruction you receive, the main key to success in writing, as in practically anything, is practice.

If you have aspirations for writing, read newspaper articles not only for the content but for technique and style. Note both the good and the bad; incorporate the good and correct the bad.

If an expression or choice of words is particularly catchy, or if a lead strikes you as being unique and grabs your interest, remember the idea and use it yourself later on.

For additional, more detailed information, some sources you can refer to are *The Professional Journalist* (used as the journalism textbook at Ambassador College, Big Sandy), the Associated Press and United Press International style-books and the accompanying boxes of pointers and rules that apply especially to *The Worldwide News*.

Follow these suggestions and your articles, and your newspaper, will continually increase in quality.

ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHS

1. All photographs should be accompanied by typed captions (double-spaced) clearly identifying all persons and explaining what is taking place in the photograph (see point No. 7 in the box on the second page).
2. After the caption, write "Photo by . . ." and insert the name of the photographer.
3. Ideally, photos submitted should be 5-by-7-inch black-and-white low-contrast prints.
4. All photos submitted become the property of *The Worldwide News* and in most cases are not returnable.