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# wordworks

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weber state college writing center

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## From the editor...

•Lib Thatcher

Editor, Writing Assistant

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Lee McKenzie said something interesting the other day. She was talking about the work we do in the Writing Center and acknowledged how hard it is, and that she thinks writing assistants are often asked to deal with situations that would even be difficult for professors to handle.

I agree. In the Writing Center, we encounter and must respond effectively to a variety of students: from those working on accounting papers for graduate work, to ESL students, to those who view the Writing Center as punishment. And since we aren't professors, students often don't take us seriously: "But you don't understand; I like this comma right where it is!"

I believe in what we do in the Writing Center and hope all of you share my enthusiasm. Official recognition for the work we do has come from the National Council of Teachers of English in Urbana, Illinois. They write:

"The effectiveness of classroom writing instruction is significantly improved by the assistance students receive in writing centers.

"Centers provide students with individual attention to their writing and often provide faculty and graduate students with opportunities to learn more about effective writing instruction.

"Because these centers enhance the conditions of teaching and learning, their development and support should be an important departmental institutional priority."

I like working in the Writing Center. I find it both stimulating and challenging. And I am motivated by all of the other writing assistants. Maybe someday I'll be able to write poetry as prolifically as Marion, to be as smart as Neil, to freewrite as easily as Diane, to be as creative as Brent, or to be as humorous as Ron.

Give yourselves a pat on the back. You deserve it. And keep up the good work!

Dr. Mikkelsen  
English Dept. W.S.C.

Classic, Unique and One of a Kind.  
The last of a breed in love  
with the literature past.  
Dinosaur facing extinction,  
caterpillar no cocoon  
From seaman to professor in western boots.  
Spanning the spectrum from  
macho to sensitive,  
From Truly Tasteless Jokes to Shakespeare,  
From troglodyte to Venus.  
The essence of humility magnified by many.  
Speaking about Sartre.  
Never quite conforming to proper decorum.  
Age crowds him like Mr. Chipps,  
The trappings of Pavlov, tone of Landor.  
"The Road Not Taken?" the less traveled one  
Always seemed right.  
Longings left undone "Sailing to Byzantium."  
Insights to those who dissect the light  
Find joy in just being, giving,  
loving and Teaching,  
"And that makes all the difference."

-Marion Pust  
Writing Assistant

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## The Writing Fellow Program

Report: Winter 1990

•Sherri B. Jensen

Writing Assistant, Fellow

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One of the goals of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program is to implement some kind of writing component within a non-English class. This goal is assisted by the Writing Fellow program, which enables students to become more effective writers by having a Writing Fellow available to introduce the class to some writing processes and methods. In a series of six days throughout

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•Luana Au

Writing Assistant

I'll never forget how I felt as I sat in my English 102 class. I was extremely nervous because it had been so long since I had had anything to do with writing. Fall quarter, my first quarter back in school in an unmentionable length of years, I had an agonizing experience in writing a term paper for my music class, and I decided there and then that I would not put myself through another such experience again. So, here I was, ready to learn how to write with confidence and skill.

I had warned my teacher that it had been several years since I had taken an English 101 course at BYU, and that maybe I needed to take it over again. But after seeing a sample of my writing, he assured me that I would have no trouble at all in doing well in his class. Thus started the most unpleasant quarter of my college career.

It started out simply enough. I threw myself into my projects and essays, and I especially enjoyed the research that was necessary for some of my papers. The fact that I was spending a phenomenal amount of time on just one class didn't bother me because I was enjoying myself, and I was sure that I would get a good grade. After all, my teacher, had assured me that I was a good writer, and when he saw how much work I had done, how could he not give me an "A?" As you can guess, this false feeling of confidence didn't last.

When I got my first paper back with a "B+" I was devastated. I know, it doesn't sound so horrible, but when you put your whole heart and soul into a project, and all you have to show is a "B+" it can be pretty upsetting. (What in the world did he mean by "lacks coherence?" I understood perfectly well what I was saying! With a doctorate in English, you would think he would be able to understand too!) I had been to the Writing Center, and since my paper had been "approved" by one of the assistants working there, I had assumed that it was perfect. Wrong!

I decided that I'd get professional help on my next paper, so I hired a professional tutor. This time, I was positive I would get an A. Wrong again! My husband even bought me a computer to save me from spending long hours

at the typewriter, but even this didn't help because now, as I sat in front of the computer, I was frozen with the fear that nothing I could write would ever be good enough. (I can remember taking two hours just trying to write

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winter quarter, two lecture-type presentations and four small group sessions were organized for Dr. E. A. Nunn's Economics 274 class.

The lecture presentations were 30-40 minutes of verbal instruction by the Fellow on writing processes and methods. The first of the lecture presentations included freewriting, brainstorming, and clustering. The second included outlining and research methods.

Dr. Nunn was actively involved in these presentations. She led several freewrites and explained how the writing methods applied directly to the assigned papers. Her involvement let the students see that writing was important to her as a professor and gave them the opportunity to work with her in the writing process as well as in the economic curriculum.

The small-group sessions were designed for the students to "peer review" their rough drafts for the paper that was due the following week. The class was first divided into two groups: students with rough drafts and students with outlines. These groups were then divided into groups of three to four students within the draft/outline separations. The groups were very effective when there was a worksheet for them to follow. The students indicated that the groups working with rough drafts rather than outlines were more beneficial.

One-on-one writing assistance with the Fellow was also available to the students after class on an appointment basis. Approximately six hours were spent during Winter quarter in these individual sessions.

This program appears to have been successful during winter quarter. Dr. Nunn has indicated that the quality of the writing improved over fall quarter's papers. The majority of the students have indicated that the presentations were informative and the groups were helpful in the revision of their papers. With some minor improvements, this program will be repeated in Dr. Nunn's class during spring quarter.

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the perfect thesis sentence, and then later rejecting it when I found out that it had absolutely nothing to do with my essay!)

The clincher was when another student told me that it was possible to CLEP out of English courses. I realized that I probably would have been able to do that because of the high scores I received on tests I had taken before coming back to school. However, it was too late to drop the course or change it to credit/non-credit. I was in it for the duration.

In utter desperation, I turned again to the Writing Center. (After all, I was spending from four to ten hours a day, seven days a week on this class, and I felt like I was just spinning my wheels!) Thanks to a wonderful, understanding lady named Diane Kulkarni, and a skilled writing assistant named JoAnn Holbrook. I was saved! All of a sudden, the things that my teacher had been trying to get through to me were making sense. They showed me techniques where I could overcome writer's block and get my ideas down on paper. I was shown how to organize my ideas and have my thoughts flow logically from one paragraph to another. Another assistant helped me with some questions I had about grammar. The end result? My final grade was an "A." and I knew without a doubt that I would never have been able to pull it off without them. I also realized that I would never have learned these skills if I had taken a CLEP test in order to avoid taking the class.

I have to admit, when Diane Kulkarni called me and asked me to consider working as a writing assistant, I was floored! In fact, every time I thought about it in the following three days, I couldn't help laughing. Then, after the initial disbelief subsided, I started to seriously consider her suggestion. I remembered hearing that sometimes the best teachers are people who have really struggled to learn something. I knew that if I had nothing else to offer, I at least had a deep and abiding empathy for anyone who had to suffer through an English writing class, or any writing project for that matter. And besides, I figured that if I had to learn enough about writing in order to help someone else, surely some of that knowledge and ability would rub off on me! Because I knew that writing skills are an asset in any field, I realized that this was a great opportunity for me to acquire those skills.

And so I decided to become a assistant, and it has been one of the best

decisions I have ever made. I enjoy working with the students who come for help, and I appreciate all the things I am learning in my tutoring methods class. I still have a lot to learn, and a long way to go before I can feel confident about my abilities, but I also know that I've come a long way from where I used to be. And that's really why I came back to school: to learn and to better myself.

## Comic Relief

### SPELLING

I take it you already know  
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?  
Others may stumble, but not you On  
hiccough, thorough, slough, and  
through?  
Well done! And now you wish perhaps,  
To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of heard, a dreadful word  
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.  
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead:  
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!  
Watch out for meat and great and threat,  
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt).  
A moth is not a moth in mother  
Nor both in bother, broth in brother.

And here is not a match for there,  
And dear and fear for bear and pear,  
And then there's dose and rose and lose-  
Just look them up--end goose and choose,  
And cork and work and card and ward,  
And font and front and word and sword,  
And do and go, then thwart and cart.  
Come, come, I've hardly made a start.

A dreadful language? Why, man alive,  
I'd learned to talk it when I was five,  
And yet to write it, the more I tried,  
I hadn't learned it a fifty-five.

•Author Unknown

**Congratulations to our writing assistants whose work was accepted for the National Undergraduate Literature Conference: Neil Hollands, Ron Peterson, and Marlon Pust read original poetry; Brett Hart, Brent Mark, and Lib Thatcher read their papers.**



*Editor's note: Dennis Owens wrote this paper for Dr. Subbiah's English 111 class. We felt it was interesting and well-written enough to publish in wordworks. We encourage student submissions to wordworks and would like all writing assistants and professors to be on the look-out for outstanding student papers.*

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## **Parachutes, Courage, and Runways**

### **-Dennis Owens**

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Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

Over and over again I repeated this phrase in my head while going through the motions. Strapped to my back was a worn olive-green parachute.

It was 11:30 on a warm September morning. I was at our small community airport, and two hours away from boarding a Cessna airplane to ascend to thirteen hundred feet. I would soon be jumping out, praying all the way that this parachute would take me safely back to Earth.

All morning long I had wondered why I had chosen to go skydiving in the first place. I had never done anything like this before. I guess that like so many other young men, I needed proof of my courage, something tangible. I sincerely believed that this would be the crossroads in my life, an appropriate event to officially mark my independence and adulthood. What better way to do it than by skydiving. So there I was, not feeling very courageous, yet for some reason determined to go on: I had to go on.

We started our training with the two basic things that we needed to know before our first jump: how to land, and what to do if our parachute fails to function. As the scheduled jump drew closer, I felt a tenseness inside, almost like a guitar string tightened to the breaking point.

Over and over again we pretended to jump from the plane, and our jump master jerked on the straps to simulate an opening chute. He told us of some particular malfunction, and we then acted out what we would do. Our response was always the same: first, we had to disengage the parachute by "dropping" open two metal casings on the harness each containing a metal ring. By "popping" these rings the parachute would be released from the harness. Then we would engage our emergency parachute by simply "pulling" its rip cord. We practiced this again and again. Meanwhile in my head I played a raging game of tug-a-war.

Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

Why are we spending so much time doing this? After all, it wasn't likely that this would happen, or was it?

Drop'em, Pop'etp, Pull.

But it was all so simple: jumping from the plane, a smooth ride down, and a relatively soft landing, right?

Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

But something could go wrong. There were so many factors out of my control: the plane, my parachute, the wind.

Drop'em, Pop'em, Pull.

After we boarded, the Cessna ascended until it reached the thirteen-hundred-foot level, then slowed down and circled for us to exit. The jump master signalled me over to the door to prepare for my jump. As I positioned myself, my legs on a step outside of the plane, I was awestruck by the incredible view before me. So this is how the birds see it. No wonder they spend so much of their time up here.

An interesting thing happened to me at that point. The panic that I had experienced earlier was now reduced to butterflies, and I no longer doubted my desire to jump. I remember my parachute opening with a jolt. I went from a fast free-fall to a sudden stop. I didn't bother to check to see if my parachute was functioning properly. It was there, and that was good enough for me.

At first I couldn't believe what my own eyes were seeing: I first noticed the long chain of cities which stretched from north to south like small clusters of crystal agate. Each one was connected to the next by a narrow black band on which people travelled in cars that looked more like metallic mice without tails. In between each city was a patchwork of green, yellow, and brown carpet dotted with trees that resembled floating green sea sponges. To the west was the velvety blue water of the Great Salt Lake. To the east was a wall of mountain.

There I was, not falling but hanging, suspended in mid-air by a piece of semi-circular cloth with holes in it. Below I could see activity everywhere, people going about their business. But somehow detached from the world, time had completely stopped for me.

The only sound that I could hear hundreds of feet above the Earth was the air filling my ears, like wind whipping through a narrow canyon. There was an incredible feeling of peace and serenity in the way that the wind

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gently swung my body back and forth like the pendulum of a clock.

While experiencing these feelings, I had completely forgotten that the ride was only supposed to last three minutes. Suddenly it occurred to me that I was supposed to be aiming for a landing area. Scanning the ground, I located the red flag indicating the site. It was about a quarter of a mile north of my position. I would never make it. I relented to land wherever the parachute and wind took me.

Just before landing, I remember thinking: Where did that runway come from? I realized then where I would be landing. Then I thought: I only hope that it's softer than it looks. My body stiffened up as I prepared for impact.

Fortunately, I had a good strong back wind pushing me forward. Rather than coming straight down on the concrete, I landed in stages, like a kite dragging its tail, first my feet, and then dragging them along for several yards, my knees followed and finally my arms and my head. Eventually I came to a complete stop.

That experience took place five years ago. From that moment on, I did have more confidence in myself. I was able to try new things in spite of fear. Yet, at the same time, this event did not mark an overnight change. There were still struggles, times when I did have to rely on others for support. But this experience was a step in the right direction. What I learned from this experience was that personal development comes in stages, and it is a process, not an event.

**ANNOUNCING  
WRITING IN THE MARKETPLACE**

**Open Hour**

**Thursday, April 26, 10:30 a.m.**

**Wattis Bldg. Room 206 & 207**

**Ann Dille, Director of North American  
Training Regions for Motorola  
University**

**Ann will speak about Motorola winning  
the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality  
Award and will emphasize the importance  
of good writing skills "prior to the  
production of high quality training  
products and services."**

**Motorola's presentations nationwide have  
been professional and highly motivating.  
Please plan to attend.**

## Writing Assistants

Luana Au: CIS/French

Ken Barlow: Nursing/English

Monica Blume: Business/Linguistics

Dan Cooper: Communication/English

Carolyn Durham: Psychology/Social Work

Mike Gooch: General

Brett Hart: Communication/Spanish/English

JoAnn Holbrook: English/Secondary Ed

Neil Hollands: Political Science/History/  
Communication/English

Sherri Jensen: Economics/English

Diane Kulkarni: (1987 grad) English/  
Communication

Brent Mark: English/Communication

Ronald Peterson: English/Communication

Marion Pust: English/Earth Science/Sociology

Liesa Stockdale: English Ed/French

Elizabeth Thatcher: English/Theater

Sanna Thompson: Physical Education

Jeanie Wiecks: English

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### **Statement of Purpose: The Writing Center •Dr. John Schwiebert, Writing Center Director**

Staffed by undergraduate students (writing assistants), the Writing Center is a unique place where W. S. C. students can receive feedback on their writing in a comfortable, non-threatening environment. The Center seeks to help all students, of all levels of writing ability, at any stage of the writing process. Trained writing assistants ask questions, listen, demonstrate techniques of invention, drafting, and revising, and provide an attentive and challenging audience for the student writer. Rather than "fixing" or proofreading papers, we model strategies so that students can help themselves to become better writers. In this way the Center fosters independent thinking, promotes a collaborative spirit, and improves intellectual growth and writing ability.

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## wordworks

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Design: Brett Hart, Liesa Stockdale

Writing Center Director: Dr. John Schwiebert

Writing Center Coordinator: Diane Kulkarni

Writing Center Hours: SS 042

8:30-2:30 Monday & Thursday

8:30-4:30 Tuesday & Wednesday

8:30-1:30 Friday

10:30-1:30 Saturday SS 040

Writing Center Phone: 626-6463