Issue 129 • May 2022

barefootWriter

Celebrating 10 Years of Helping People Find Freedom Through Well-Paid Writing



Barefoot Writer Lynelle Suan of South Luzon, Philippines, has found freedom, confidence, and a satisfying income through copywriting. More of her story inside...

in this issue

FEATURES

5 ***Living the Writer's Life***
Peter Smolens and Lynelle Suan offer glimpses into two completely different approaches to launching a rewarding *writer's life*

9 ***Interview with a Barefoot Writer***
Industry veteran Nick Usborne explains the opportunity that currently has him most excited about paid writing — and what it could mean for you

17 ***Featured Essay***
5 new trends that spell opportunity for digital copywriters

21 ***Barefoot Writing Opporunity***
An empath's path to the six-figure *writer's life*

DEPARTMENTS

3 ***What You'll Learn In This Issue***
The burnt ship trick for higher writing income

26 ***Thinking Like a Writer***
Overwhelmed to overjoyed: Jump-start your career by writing about 'the good'

29 ***Productivity Secrets***
Write and prosper in a world of distractions and temptations

32 ***Monthly Motivator***
Put your inner critic in 'time-out'

35 ***Ask AWAI***
What to do when you're ready to take that next step, and how to combine a love of fiction writing with copywriting… Rebecca and Katie answer your questions.

36 ***The Barefoot Writing Challenge***
What's your favorite Broadway production, either that you've seen or want to see, and why would you recommend it?



ABOUT OUR COVER:

Lynelle Suan felt out of place when she first started business school, and began looking for other options. The discovery of copywriting opened a bright new world for her, prompting her to quickly shelve her original career plan and instead forge an entirely new path as a paid writer. In her first eight months of writing, she's exceeded the average annual income in the Philippines, including income earned from engineers and physicians.

The Burnt Ship Trick for Higher Writing Income

Thank goodness we're past the days of conquistadors — like Cortés and his infamous takeover of the Aztec Empire in 1519. He was successful in part by ensuring there was no way to turn back, for him or his men (some of whom were planning mutiny in the form of escape back to Cuba). He did it with a single command: "Burn the ships!"

Historians agree it was one heck of a gamble… but it worked. There's just something about setting a goal and ensuring zero recourse that can seriously up your odds.

But here's the thing… Paid writing is neither a gamble nor an uphill battle. The odds are in your favor. And with each passing year, the opportunities keep growing for writers like you, ably trained in persuasive writing and cognizant of the human experience. Just look at our Barefoot Writing Opportunity this month (p. 21) — it's in hot demand, and success relies on good writing plus intuition as to how something *feels*.

Amanda Cowart further demonstrates how prevalent these writing opportunities are. She found one sitting right in her lap at a job she was ready to flee — which she instead flipped into a mission she loved (p. 26).

Then there's Jason Gaspero, a real-life example of someone who gets to live in paradise, all thanks to writing… *but* he's clear about what it takes to make that your reality (p. 29). His good lessons take us right back to burning the ships and cementing your future as a writer. And finally, Karmin Gentili shows us exactly what to let go of (or perhaps, send down with those ships) when you're ready to move forward in paid writing (p. 32).

And for that final shot of motivation, that glimpse into all the things that got you excited to write for a living in the first place, look no further than my interview with a longtime, favorite expert on all things writing, Nick Usborne (p. 9).

To no turning back!,

Mindy

Mindy McHorse
Executive Editor, *Barefoot Writer*
mindy@barefootwriter.com



Here I am, holding the promo that first got me excited about writing for a living. (I even used it to convince my husband this was a great idea!)

Published by:
American Writers & Artists Institute
220 George Bush Blvd Ste D
Delray Beach, FL 33444

Publishers:
Katie Yeakle and Rebecca Matter

Executive Editor:
Mindy McHorse

Layout:
Mike Klassen

Copy Editor:
Laurel Robinson

Questions?
Contact Member Services:
www.awai.com/contact
866-879-2924 or 561-278-5557

© American Writers & Artists Institute, 2022.
All rights reserved.
Protected by copyright laws of the United States and international treaties.

Selected photos from Bigstock, Fotolia, iStock

Challenge Prompt: As more live shows and theater continue to open up, let's talk Broadway! What's your favorite Broadway production, either that you've seen or want to see, and why would you recommend it? Write a letter persuading a fellow writer to go!



Amanda Cowart ("Overwhelmed to Overjoyed: Jump-Start Your Career by Writing About 'The Good'") is inspired by the quote "The opposite of depression isn't happiness; it's purpose" (Cathy Heller). She's worked as a nonprofit/fundraising copywriter since 2018 and made the leap into full-time freelance work in December 2021. She is enjoying the flexibility of her NEW *writer's life* with her husband, three boys ages 9, 6, and 3, and rescue beagle mutt (the only other girl in the house).

How do you measure a year? Thanks to Rent, we know there are 525,600 minutes… many of which I spend belting out songs from that still-amazing musical. Best part: my kids' eye-rolls when I usher them out the door by singing, "Goodbye, love, good-BYE LOOOOOVE. Goodbye, love, goodbye…" They really love it.



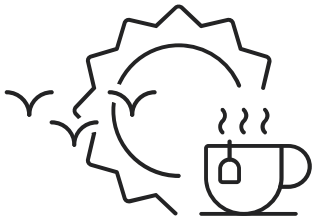
When people ask **Jason Gaspero** ("Write and Prosper in a World of Distractions and Temptations"), "Where are you from?" he has a bit of trouble answering the question. That's because Jason, a self-confessed vagabond, has lived in eight states and 11 countries. Today, he calls the idyllic tropical island of Koh Phangan, Thailand, home, where he spends his time writing copy, reading books, learning how to build funnels, photographing exotic wildlife, feeding friendly street dogs tasty treats, and barbecuing freshly caught seafood on his sea-view balcony.

Go see Moulin Rouge! The Musical. It's won 10 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. The New York Daily News called it a "dazzling, decadent live translation of the 2001 movie." And tickets start at only $79, which seems like a great deal for an award-winning Broadway show. I'd check it out myself but I live on the other side of the world!



When **Karmin Gentili** ("Put Your Inner Critic in 'Time-Out'") left corporate America, she did it with gusto. After over 25 years in corporate human resources and compliance departments, she was exhausted and needed a change. AWAI offered the skills she needed to fully transition to *the writer's life*. Now she can freely help her aging parents while pursuing a passion, creating income, and not having to tiptoe through corporate politics.

As someone who was a music major in college, I absolutely love musical theater — and there's nowhere better to see it than on Broadway. Even though my favorite musical of all time is Les Misérables, and Wicked is fantastic (oh, the list could go on), the most fun I've ever had at a musical was at Mama Mia! If you love the music of the '70s, and ABBA, in particular, you don't want to miss that party-atmosphere experience!



Barefoot Writers Come From All Walks Of Life

Retired Writer and Artist Isn't Afraid to 'Put His Butt in the Chair and Write!'

Peter Smolens fell in love with photography the moment he first saw a black-and-white print being developed. He's also passionate about digital painting and even published a book on the topic. Through a happy set of circumstances, this love of art and photography led him to a career as a technical writer. Peter attributes his success to persistence. He draws inspiration from the adage, "You have to put your butt in the chair and do the work!"

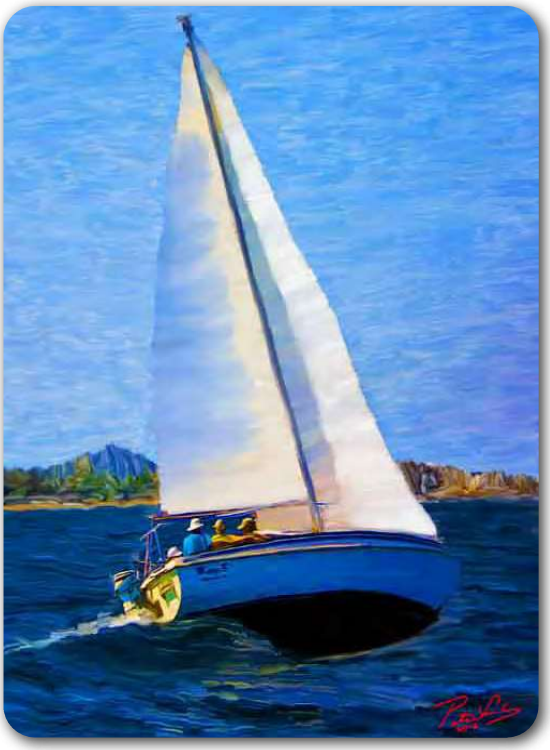
How did you first start working as a freelance writer?

I originally wanted to be a photographer. I was the geek with the camera in high school, always taking pictures. After going to college for photography, I became a writer when an editor asked me to write an article to accompany a series of photographs that I had submitted to his regional travel magazine. The article was published!

I moved on and became a computer programmer to make a living, writing freelance feature articles on nights and weekends. I switched to technical writing when a boss read a golf magazine article of mine. That started me on a path for the next 20 years of working for various government agencies as a technical writer before my retirement to become a caregiver to my wife.

What kinds of writing and what kinds of clients do you enjoy most these days?

Although I'm a retired, full-time caregiver for my wife (she has a long-term illness), I use my little free time to write nonfiction feature articles for newspapers, magazines, corporate, and online publications. After 20 years as a technical writer (after being a programmer), I've been writing articles for corporate (never burn your bridges) clients.



Peter painted this piece to show his brother in a sailboat.

What do you enjoy most about your *writer's life*?

I barely graduated high school English because of dyslexia (spelling and grammar — thank God for computer spell check and Grammarly ☺). I had the persistence to write and publish more than 100 features, columns, technical articles, and a book about digital painting using Adobe Photoshop. The most recent affirmation that persistence pays off is winning the *Barefoot Writer* magazine monthly contest (January 2021). The column is about persistence.

What is the most challenging aspect of your daily work?

Because I'm a full-time caretaker for my wife, time is the biggest challenge. Having the time to learn how to expand my writing tool chest to include copywriting, SEO, and content writing is limited. Still, while I'm in the middle of *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*, I can already see the benefits of persuasive writing.



This painting shows Peter's wife while she cuddles with her cat.

What has been the most influential resource for you to develop your writing skills?

I'm a perfect example that anyone can write. I don't have the natural talent for writing, but I have one of the cornerstones of writing — persistence. If you want to be a writer, you have to do as the late Tom Clancy [is supposed to have] said about writing a novel: "It [the book] is not going to write itself. You have to put your butt down in the chair and do the work."

Clancy's words rang true with me. Persistence is what keeps me going. It's what puts my backside in the chair every day. I write when I'm feeling sick and get form rejection emails from editors. If you want to succeed, you have to write every day.

Any tips for writers who are just starting out?

Use available tools like Grammarly and Hemingway Editor to help with spelling and grammar. Yoast SEO assists in writing better SEO web content, and these programs will make your writing better.

Also, keep learning by reading, watching videos, and taking classes. AWAI has great courses in many different areas of persuasive writing. (I'm eyeing the SEO course myself.) You can always find ways to improve. The best improvement method is the physical act of writing.

What piece of digital artwork are you most proud of?

That is a difficult choice. I agree with Billy Joel, who thinks of songs he writes like his "children." You create them and then share them with the world and let others decide which ones are good. It's the same with my digital paintings, and they each have a special meaning.