

Writer conducts workshop for freelancers

By Pearl Ahnen
special writer

Do you have to be 10 feet tall and a heavenly being to be a writer?

That's what Jeanne Paul thought as a young college student at Boston University, and that's why she decided to major in political science, although deep down in her heart she wanted to write.

"If I majored in political science, I thought I'd at least be able to read the newspapers," she said.

Paul is conducting a workshop, "Freelance Writing for Glory and Profit," 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, April 30, at The Community House in Birmingham.

Paul said, "In my freshman year, a literature professor told me not only would I fail as a writer but I wouldn't do something in writing."



Watercolor creativity

Learning to be creative while working with watercolors is the goal award-winning artist Marjorie Chellistors has set for the students she teaches in Farmington Community Center. Informal spring classes, which include demonstrations and critiques geared to the needs of each student, begin at 7:30 p.m. Monday and continue for six Mondays. Registration information is given by calling the center, 477-8404.

even finish college so I cast around for other courses and put my self-confidence on hold.

"In my senior year I took a course in English and enjoyed it and did well in it. But I'm grateful to that literature professor because I might have been scared away from journalism if I had learned what was out there as a freshman. As it was, I graduated from Boston University in 1984 still wanting to do something in writing."

"I thought about advertising but went to a conference, and all I saw were writers with pinched expressions on their faces who chain-smoked. So I did the next best thing and ran away and joined the Peace Corps. I learned Portuguese and was assigned to a north coast port in Brazil, called Fortaleza.

"I started a newspaper there and also taught and helped in community development. I lived in a convent, shared a room with two other women college students. The convent was used for housing for women."

Paul, who grew up in Conn River Valley, Connecticut, moved to Washington D.C. in 1988 after finishing her assignment in the Peace Corps. She continued working for the Peace Corps as a recruiter, writing recruitment folders and worked on a slide presentation show at the San Antonio Hemisphere. After that she freelanced until 1989.

"I had a way of making contacts, did some editing for small publications and wrote pamphlets. In 1973 while walking my dog, my dog got into a fight with another dog that was attached to a man. He was someone I had met earlier and now was chief of staff for Senator Percy. He asked me what I was doing and if I'd be interested in helping him write a book. As it turned out I did,

and the book was "Growing Old in the Country of the Young," with a byline by Senator Charles H. Percy.

"What that book did for me was give me a field to write about — specialize in — everyone should have an area they know something about in depth," she said.

From helping ghost write a book, Paul went to ghost writing an article for Senator Percy which appeared in "Parade" magazine. And it was on growing old. Since she had found her field, she then went on to ghost writing a nationally syndicated column called "Prime Time" which was about aging and published in 50-60 newspapers.

Under her own byline, Paul did a story about the high cost of funerals. It was about a woman, a Polish immigrant, who couldn't speak or write English, who was charged \$17,000 for her husband's funeral. The story caused such interest that an investigation resulted and there was a court hearing.

Paul attended the hearing, and she said that the judge said, "If it weren't for journalists we wouldn't be at this hearing today."

Something was finally done about high-cost funerals, she added.

PAUL STARTED teaching freelance writing two years ago in her Ann Arbor home. It was so successful, she said, that someone heard about her classes and suggested she conduct a workshop in Ann Arbor.

Some 40 people attended, most of them in their 30s, 40s and 50s. A few had done freelance writing, but all wanted to become freelance writers.

After the first workshop held in Birmingham in December, she said they

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