

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

the newsletter of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers, Inc.

President's Column

July – August 2019

Decision Time



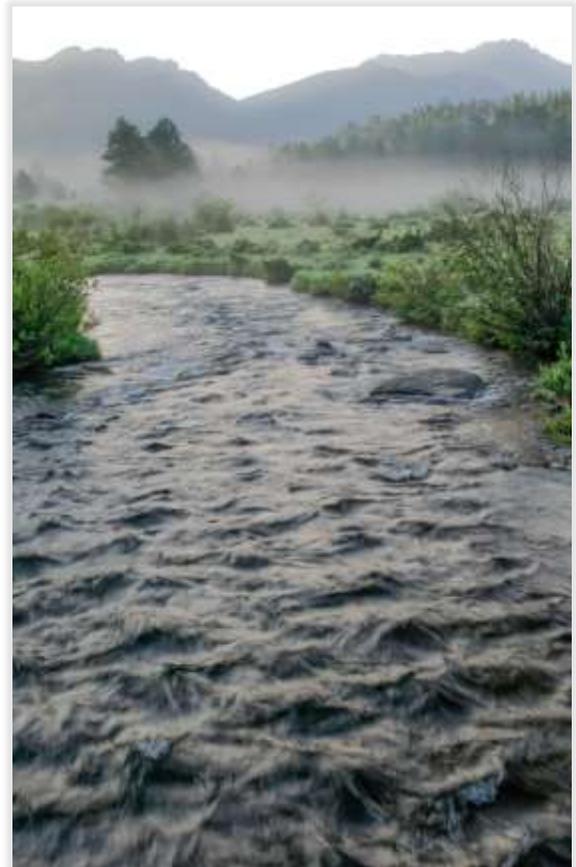
Kent Taylor

One of the great opportunities of the RMOWP organization through the years has been the annual photo workshop. This long-standing summer ritual has provided first-class, professional instruction in nature photography for the many participants who signed up and showed up, wanting to improve their skills in the beauty of Rocky Mountain National Park. Most recently, coordinator Nic Showalter and instructors Jared Gricoskie and Fred Lord have for the past 11 years created a remarkable learning experience and contribution to the field of photography. Individuals from several states across the country have taken part. It has been a good run indeed.

As the challenge of attracting enough participants to keep the workshop self-supporting has become more complex, however, the decision was made to cancel the workshop this summer. A difficult decision for Nic as you might imagine. Even with an increasing number of hits through social media and an ongoing, intensive evaluation of means, methods and analytics, the inquiries did not ultimately translate into enough participants to conduct a viable workshop (an ongoing tension in recent years).

So we have come to a decision point, a fallow time. The RMOWP board of directors plans to discuss the future of the workshop at our conference in September. Whether it should take some other form going forward or whether it perhaps has come to a natural end will be considered. We are interested in your input.

(Please send comments/suggestions to info@rmowp.org.)



Big Thompson River flowing through Moraine Park early one morning during the 2007 RMOWP Photo Workshop
© Kent Taylor

Important Conference Deadlines

Rocky Mountain National Park is popular. Very popular. It had the third highest number of visitors of any national park last year, and for two very good reasons: the scenery is spectacular and the wildlife abundant. Imagine how annoying it is when you're trying to get a shot of a wonderful snow-capped mountain peak, and those pesky elk or moose keep blocking your view.

RMOWP is heading to the park, with headquarters just outside the park entrance in Estes Park, Colorado, for our 46th annual conference. Dates are September 9-12 (that's Monday afternoon through Thursday evening).

For conference details see www.rmowp.org or the in-

formation we previously sent you, but here are some important **deadlines** that conference attendees need to know.

Conference registration should be in by Monday, August 19, but we need *tour* numbers for Rocky Mountain Conservancy before that, by August 9. We need *meal* numbers by Monday, September 2.

And **Very Important** – *If you need to cancel lodging*, do so as early as possible. Our conference headquarters, Trout Haven Resorts, requires a full 60 days cancellation notice for a full refund, and most other lodging properties in Estes Park require at least a week or two.

The conference should be fun. See you there.

Writer's Corner

I Have a Poor Attitude



Virginia with her beloved Roxanne

By Virginia Parker Staata

People seem to think there's a magic formula to writing.

I just write one word at a time.

~ Stephen King

Earning my college degree certainly had its fits and starts. David's career sent us to six states and a foreign country before we landed for good back in Texas in 1991.

Over a twenty-year period, I attended five different colleges. Most of my writing professors taught me the craft. Because of one professor, however, I laid down my pen for nearly ten years.

David and I had transferred from Arkansas in December of 1981. I was eager to begin the spring semester at my new university, particularly knowing I was only three short semesters from graduating. Unfortunately, the only writing course offered that I hadn't already taken was an independent study.

I met with the professor to discuss the course. She arrived at her office dressed in a boldly flowered blouse, gaucho pants, a leather vest, and matching leather knee-high boots – hardly normal attire for the Deep South. In her defense, she had just transferred in from Rochester, New York.

We sat in her cramped office, stacked high in one corner with moving boxes. I think we were both surprised to discover I was nearly her peer in age.

After cordial introductions, she handed me her recently published book of short stories and asked to read one of mine. I offered her *Lovelady*, a story that my Arkansas writing professor considered one of my best. My new professor and I were to meet again the following week to discuss our respective works.

That meeting is one I will never forget. The professor announced that the university was now, thanks to her, "perpetuating a certain style of writing." She also told me in no uncertain terms that my style didn't fit.

I asked her what she meant by "perpetuating a style." She asked if I had read her short stories. I had. They felt strange to me, free flowing, circular and vague, with less of a storyline than an idea running through them. She told me her goal was to have all future university graduates emulate her way of writing. She said that I needed to change my style and use her formula.

The professor pulled my short story from a stack on her desk and handed it to me. She said, "Let's start with this one."

She eviscerated the piece. As an example, the story's ending had an elderly woman rediscovering the beauty of a sunrise. My Arkansas professor had considered the ending poignant and beautiful. The new professor announced that it wasn't realistic. She said bluntly, "Old people don't dream."

I noticed the pages had nearly a dozen small, red-inked circles throughout. I flipped the pages to see what she had circled and almost laughed out loud. She had circled every time I had used the word *cow*. The story's setting began and ended on a dairy farm. She said I needed to find another word for *cow* because I had used it too frequently.

I admit I was fairly bristled and exasperated at this point. I asked, "Would you prefer that I use *bovine*?"

She looked at me over her glasses, pointed her finger at my nose, and said, "YOU have a poor attitude."

Next she told me my independent study would focus on analyzing her short stories, defining her formula, and explaining her style. I was to keep a notebook listing the nuances for each of her stories so that I would understand what was expected of me in my own future writing.

Needless to say, it was a most difficult semester. Over the next several months, she tried to mold me into herself. At first, I experimented with her formula, trying to think of it as a venture into the writing unknown. It didn't work for me. The more she tried to force fit my work, the more discouraged and withdrawn I became. I stopped writing. By the end of the semester, I had had enough of formulas. I left the university and put my college dreams and writing on hold. In 1991, when we returned to Texas after a three-year stint in Mexico, I earned my degree and rediscovered my writing voice.

To say the least, I am no fan of formulaic writing. In my humble opinion and experience, formulas stifle creativity, forcing writers to comply with an equation rather than a craft. There are dozens of different formulas to fit different writing genres. A few examples include the inverted pyramid (front-loaded stories with the most important facts first), the APE method (assertion, proof, explanation), the

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five-paragraph essay (introduction, three supporting paragraphs, conclusion), and even Arieti's free flow formula (styled after observing his schizophrenic patients and how their thoughts morphed into related concepts).

I do believe that studying different formulas can be valuable for beginning writers. They can be building blocks to understanding writing strategies. Mark Wiley concurs in his article *The Popularity of Formulaic Writing (and Why We Need to Resist)*. He writes, "To develop as writers, students must develop a repertoire of strategies for dealing effectively with various writing tasks presented to them in different situations. They must also learn to make choices about genre, content, structure, organization, and style; and they must learn to hone their judgments about the effects of the choices they make as writers."

Author and teacher Alex Kameen in his article *A Formula for Failure: The Problem with Formulaic Writing* echoes the greatest problem I see with writing formulas. He explains that formulaic writing holds control over what, where, when, and how students write. Formulaic writing can also cause students to relinquish the formation of their own ideas. As a result of formulaic writing, Kameen believes "the beautiful voices of many students are systematically silenced before they have a chance to rise."

Kameen continues, "As I have witnessed in my own classroom, writing formulas tend to strip the power of *creation, discovery, and voice* from writers, as my students are asked simply to 'comply' with the parameters of an equation, as opposed to generating innovative ideas. This can frustrate their ability to experience the power of true inquiry, which is a shame."

If you are writing by formula, I beg you to cease and desist immediately. Instead, surrender to the story and see what emerges. Discover your style without constraints. Create something new. Allow yourself the joy of writing from the depths of your soul. Abandon the formula and hear the beautiful voice that arises from the ashes.

I don't know if my old professor was successful in bringing her formula to the university's writing program. If she was, I am convinced that many beautiful voices were silenced in the process. The good news is that I learned a valuable lesson from this woman: Never let someone steal your voice. There will always be people who will want to change you. Learn as soon as possible how to be comfortable in your own skin... and keep writing.

Screenwriter David Seltzer says, "If you go in with a formula, you come out with a formula. The whole thrill of being a writer is to do a prototype every time out. And you can do it, something that nobody ever wrote before." Perhaps it's my poor attitude talking, but I agree with him completely.

What to Bring to Conference

RMOWP Conference 2019 is just around the corner. We'll be gathering in Estes Park, Colorado to explore Rocky Mountain National Park in early September and it's never too early to start organizing the stuff you'll want to cart along. So here's a checklist:

WRITING FOR THE ANNE SULLIVAN WRITER'S FORUM - Your written work will be gently and positively examined with the purpose of finding ways to improve it. It should not be your best work, but something you would like help with. Works can include stories, poems, photo essays, or other formats with an outdoor theme. Participants should bring at least **12 copies** of the work, and although the length of the works can vary, about **1,200 words or less** would be best. Spectators - and commentators - are welcome.

DIGITAL PHOTOS FOR THE PHOTO CRITIQUE - Entertaining and informative for all, this program looks at photographs with an eye to how they could be improved. Please bring images that you're maybe not too happy with, not your best. Those who want their shots critiqued should bring **3 to 5 digital images on CD or flash drive**.

PHOTO PRINTS FOR THE MEMBERS' CHOICE CONTEST - Conference participants are the judges for this one. Members may submit **one or two matted prints**, either color or black and white, and the photos may have been taken at any time since the beginning of photography. Altered/manipulated images are eligible. Print size is a maximum of 8 x 12 inches matted to a final size not to exceed 12 x 16 inches, and entries should not be framed. On the back of each submission write "Members' Choice" but NOT your name - we'll keep track.



"My Turf" © Beto Gutierrez
2015 Members' Choice 1st Place Winner

DONATIONS FOR THE AUCTION - The RMOWP Auction is not only a lot of fun but also raises some necessary funds for the organization. We'll be receiving donations from our corporate friends, but members' donations are also needed. Bring your own matted photos or note cards, published books, craft and gift items, photo equipment, or whatever you find lying around the house, with the exception of spouses.

Jack's Jaunts

Sharing

Text & photos by Jack Olson



Around the year 2000 I read a wildflower hiking book for the Colorado mountains. It profiled a feature called Shrine Ridge and, furthermore, bestowed upon it the title of Century Hike. That would be at least a hundred different wildflowers in the course of a season. What the authors had shared would turn out to be

life-enriching for me.

One day there was a low layer of clouds over Denver so a friend and I thought we'd drive up to the mountains to check the trail out. Sure enough, we got above the clouds at about 8,000 feet. We drove to the trailhead and found a garden of wildflowers right there. It was too late in the day



Lupine on Shrine Ridge with 14,000-foot Mt. of the Holy Cross in the distance.

to start but this looked very promising. Not long after that we drove up early and hiked to the top of Shrine Ridge. You cannot see anything to the west until you hit the last step to the top.

Then it's a knock-your-socks-off view as you're stunned by the spread of the northern Sawatch Range. But wait a minute and look down, all around down. There are wildflowers here, wildflowers there, wildflowers everywhere. Do you gasp, whoop, maybe even cry? I think those hundred wildflowers were blooming right near my feet.

It was so gorgeous that I couldn't keep it to myself.



Alpine sunflowers just can't be beat



Globe flowers.

But no way would I put it on a billboard. A judicious sharing of Shrine Ridge ensued. I wrote a column about it in this newsletter. But as quality a publication as it is, it doesn't have the circulation of the *Denver Post* or *New York Times*.

I probably led some twenty people to the Ridge over the years. Each hike would be limited to two other people, excluding a dog. I was sharing but keeping it pretty quiet.

Sharing with me, a friend led me to the Secret Garden which she and her husband had stumbled upon some



The Secret Garden.

weeks before. I, in turn, led a few friends into the Secret Garden.

Nowadays I can't hike. I wish I could but those days are over. It happens. But there's nothing to keep me from sharing by utilizing Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writing and Photography.

Cold Challenges

By Peter Kummerfeldt



The challenges of functioning effectively – and safely, in a cold environment are directly related to your ability to protect yourself from the ambient temperature, precipitation and wind. While accurate numbers are difficult to come by, it is estimated that about 600 people die each year from accidental hypothermia – many of these, about 50%, are elderly. As with heat challenges, the emphasis needs to be an

awareness of the environmental threats, on early recognition of what is happening, minimizing the risk and then on effective treatment of hypothermia should it occur.

Hypothermia tends to dominate any discussion on cold-weather medical issues, however, dehydration is a much

more likely challenge to someone working or recreating in the outdoors during the colder periods of the year. Cold-induced diuresis, an increase in the need to urinate resulting from vasoconstriction, a suppressed thirst mechanism and the lack of readily accessible water, combine to make dehydration a significant problem in cold environments. Surprisingly, in cold environments sweating can also result in significant water loss. Drink enough water to keep your pee clear - or nearly so!

Accidental Hypothermia is defined as a decrease in body core temperature below 98.6° F as a result of your body's inability to produce enough heat to replace the heat that is lost to the environment in cold, wet and windy conditions. Any decrease of body temperature below normal reduces your ability to function properly. The inability to maintain normal body temperature can result from exposure to cold, windy, wet conditions combined with the lack of protective clothing, insufficient food needed to generate heat, dehydration, illness, some medications, the consumption of alcohol, and sleep deprivation. All of these factors increase the rate at which heat is lost through evaporation, convection, radiation, and conduction.

For purposes of simplicity, hypothermia can be divided into three phases:

- Mild hypothermia. The patient is alert, verbal, and actively shivering, with normal vital signs.
- Moderate hypothermia. The patient is still verbal, however will have difficulty understanding verbal commands. Shivering is violent, hand and eye movement are uncoordinated, and walking is difficult.
- Extreme hypothermia. Shivering has stopped. Patient is unresponsive to pain and barely conscious. Metabolism has slowed and vital signs will be hard to detect or measure.

General Treatment. Since it is unlikely that the equipment needed to accurately measure the patient's core temperature will be available, the assessment of the patient's condition will have to be accomplished using the other more visible signs and symptoms. Simply put, if the patient is shivering they are either mildly or moderately hypothermic and aggressive re-warming should be initiated. If they are obviously very cold and no shivering is noticed, they are extremely hypothermic and should be handled very carefully. Extremely hypothermic people are very susceptible to heart arrhythmias - rough handling can trigger ventricular fibrillation, the heart is beating but it is not pumping blood, and death will follow. In this situation it is better to protect the patient, limiting further heat loss as best possible, and then go for help. Under field conditions re-warming a hypothermia patient may be very difficult to accomplish and, at a practical level, minimizing heat loss in conjunction with whatever passive re-warming is possible (hot water bottles, chemical heat pads, etc.) may be all that can be done for the patient.

Prevention is always the best course of action. Put another way "*It is always easier to prevent a problem than it is to treat a problem.*" Don't wait until you or someone else is hypothermic – recognize the environmental conditions that cause it: cool to cold temperatures, wind and wet, and protect yourself from those conditions.

To prevent hypothermia abide by the following:

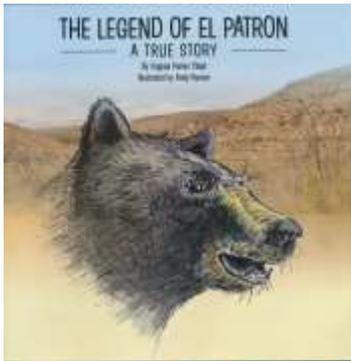
- Always travel with a buddy. Hypothermia is insidious. You may not be aware that you are becoming hypothermic but your traveling companion may notice something is not right with you.
- Either wear or have with you the clothing you need to keep yourself warm and dry. Your clothing must keep you warm and dry when you are *inactive*, i.e. sitting out the night under a tree waiting for the sun to rise. Do not underestimate the impact of wind to rob you of body heat. Avoid cotton clothing - instead wear any synthetic fabric against your skin. Polyester for example is hydrophobic and facilitates the movement of water vapor through your clothing to the outside. Pay particular attention to protecting the head, hands and feet.
- Eat for heat. Carbohydrates produce more heat than protein and it is produced quicker.
- If wet, and replacement clothing is available, change into dry clothing. If wet and no additional clothing is available – wrap up in any material (thermal blanket, tarp, etc.) and get out of the wind. Create a vapor barrier around yourself or your patient.
- Cold people are often dehydrated, sometimes very dehydrated. Assuming that they can swallow, rehydrate a patient by feeding them warm sickly sweet fluids to fuel shivering. It is the calories, not the temperature of the fluid that makes the difference!



*Elk on Trail Ridge © Vanessa Jackson
RMOWP 2010 Photo Workshop, Rocky Mountain National Park*

The Legend of El Patron

Book Review by Barb Laine



This is a charming, entertaining, and educational little book, written by RMOWP member Virginia Parker Staat. It brought both tears and chuckles – what more can a reader ask? Although written for children eight to 14, it's a lovely story for all ages. It's also a true story, and includes delightful illustrations by Andy Ramon.

El Patron, or "The Boss" as translated, is a feisty fellow, wild and free. But he's also starving, and annoyed when finally captured. In describing his plight, Virginia relates how wildlife researcher Bonnie McKinney managed to save this renegade bear from certain death after he destroyed several cabins and trailers in his quest for nourishment.

Of course it wasn't easy. Bonnie kept setting traps and El Patron kept tripping them and stealing the food without getting caught. But Bonnie persevered and eventually captured him, recorded his data, fitted him with a radio collar, and released him into the wild. Unfortunately he continued his wayward ways and had to be captured again. To commute his death sentence, Bonnie found him a home at Living Desert State Park in Carlsbad, New Mexico. El Patron's determination to be free brought more tribulations, but the equal determination of the people of Carlsbad to provide for him is the crowning touch to the story.

Along the way Virginia gives us many nuggets of "Bear Facts," exploring the unusual natural return of black bears to West Texas, how wildlife research teams deal with bears

including the use of radio telemetry, how bears prepare for the long – or not so long in West Texas – winter, and the all-important warning that we humans can help the bears and in fact all wildlife by keeping our areas free of edible refuse and storing foodstuffs for ourselves and our domesticated animals securely.

We in New Mexico love our bear tales, beginning with Smokey Bear in 1950, and I thank Virginia for adding *The Legend of El Patron* to our bear lore.

The book is available at amazon.com.

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Subject: E-mail RMO
Thanks!



Snowy peaks in Rocky Mountain National Park viewed from our conference headquarters.

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