

Cygnature

*The Newsletter of NJCreatives (SWAN)
May 2003*

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Next meeting: Wednesday, May 14, 2003

Topic: Stress for Success!

Many people think of stress as a negative, counterproductive influence. But it doesn't have to be. You can channel stress into a productive force!

At the next NJCreatives meeting, Frank Ciecierski, President - Resource Action Concepts, Inc., will explore ways to

- Identify stress
- Cope with stress
- Distinguish “eustress” (good stress!) from “distress”

7:15 – Networking and refreshments

7:45 – Meeting

Silas Condict County Park

Kinnelon Road, Kinnelon, NJ

Non-Members: \$8.00 at the door

DON'T FORGET THE LICENSING SHOW!

The Licensing Show will take over the Javits Center in New York June 10-12, 2003. And SWAN will be there!

Deadline for free admission is May 5!
After that the cost of getting through the door is \$60. Volunteer to staff the NJ Creatives (SWAN) booth, and take advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to meet the businesses who mean business for you!

This trade show is where the companies who own licensing rights meet creative types of all descriptions. Object: business! And NJ Creatives (SWAN) has taken a booth there as a way to introduce these licensees to the wide range of services our members offer, from photography, design, and illustration, to writing, Web services, and multimedia. To find out more, about the show, visit www.licensing.com.



Our Virtual Booth can be found at the following address:

http://www.licensingshow.com/licensingshow/V33/exhibitor_list/displayEx.cvn?exbID=708

By having NJ Creatives represented at the show, members have a chance for their work to be seen by a vast range of businesses. You may display one large sample of your work –

but there's a catch (natch!). You'll be asked to contribute toward the cost of the booth (amount not yet determined, but in the \$100-\$200 range) – OR you may volunteer to work at the booth during the show.

(Volunteering on site has several advantages – not only will you have access to the floor, where you may visit the other displays and hand out your business card, you may also bring your portfolio to show to interested visitors.)

There are other volunteering opportunities as well. We need you to join the Trade Show Committee. Members will help create and run the NJCreatives.org. booth. If anyone has any experience designing trade show booths, your design skills would be appreciated. We also need folks to help create signs, handouts, NJCreatives.org business cards, postcards, trade show giveaways – you name it!

We are also planning to put together some portfolio books by discipline. We want to have ALL of our members in these books, so there is NO CHARGE for this service. Contact Liz Kassler as soon as possible and send her up to three printed, non-returnable 8 1/2" x 11" promotion pieces, numbered on the back in order of preference. We will keep these books for future trade shows.

To assist either prior to the show or on site, or to submit your work for the portfolio books, contact Liz Kassler at 201-384-9784 or lizard@lizkassler.com

Remember, think LICENSING! That includes brands, products, licensable art, advertising, cartoon characters, entertainment industry, Harry Potter, Nickelodeon, Sesame Street, Barbie, Lord of the Rings, designer fashions, Santa Claus and other holiday images, religious icons ...

Please note: This fabulous opportunity is open to current SWAN members only! If you have not yet sent in your membership dues for 2002-2003, now's the time! Or if you've allowed your membership to lapse, this is a great time to come back on board



*What You Missed**April Meeting*
Creating a Business Plan

As S.W.A.N. president Dave McCoy acknowledged, no hungry freelancer imagines turning down work or walking away from a job. Sometimes, however, the best thing you can do is "Just Say No!" Some projects are not worth the hassle, especially if you never even collect a paycheck for them. But how do you spot these sticky situations before you become too involved?

Dave started the evening's discussion by reminding SWAN members about the group's Standards and Practices Committee, intended to help them settle disputes with clients.

He noted that lack of communication between freelancer and client lead to many problems. He insists that each of his clients signs a proposal that puts the agreement in writing. "Their name's on it, so they're accountable," he points out. "Leave a paper trail!"

Beware of layers of management, noted Geri Dawes, because you may never know who is really calling the shots. "The more people there are standing between you and the client, the more chances for things to go wrong!"

Ron Schaumburg offered some sadder-but-wiser advice on dealing with hopeless situations. Asked to write a script for the children's TV program BARNEY & FRIENDS, he ran into endless roadblocks, most concerning the logistics of special effects. He says, "I did six to eight treatments over six months, and finally the idea was scrapped. At least I got paid!"

He said he once gave up a nine-month writing project after three months, because he could see it wasn't going to work out. He

also refused to write medical copy for one client, because he didn't feel the existing data supported the claims for the product.

Bill Kronemyer noted that he asks for a deposit before he shoots a video for a client. If he can't get that, he sees it as a red flag. He also insists on final payment before he releases a tape, or at least a signed agreement stating that the job was satisfactory and promising payment within 30 days.

Clients who start off hazy about what they want can also cause major headaches. Stan Cohen said he once designed a web site that should have cost \$2,500, but ended up costing \$6,000, because the client kept rejecting one design after another. She willingly paid him for the extra effort, says Stan. "She knew it wasn't my fault--she'd sent me down the wrong path."

Dave recommended artists and designers offer clients no more than three initial designs to force a choice. He also charges more for alterations after a certain date, to make sure the client won't keep changing his mind indefinitely.

Other S.W.A.N. members complained about potential clients who waste their time with long chat sessions, or even pick their brains for ideas, and then never offer any paying jobs. One way to beat this problem is to charge a "consulting fee" for lengthy phone calls or office visits.

Dave showed off S.W.A.N.'s Black Book, which lists clients who have complaints lodged against them by members. If, after checking the book, you decide to do business with one of these people anyway, at least you can't say you weren't warned!



March Meeting **To Have – Or Not to Have – a Web Site?**

by Eileen Watkins

The March S.W.A.N. meeting featured guest speaker Jamie Chumas, president of the Boonton-based firm Outsourcery LLC, who emphasized the various ways in which a Web site can help the creative freelancer--by showcasing your business and your work, helping you network, and increasing your customer contact.

"Unlike someone who simply wants a Web presence for his store, a creative person needs a top-notch Web site," he said. Chumas' firm specializes in "total software development solutions." As might be expected, he came up with few reasons NOT to have a Web site. Only one, in fact: the cost. But he explained that this does not have to be exorbitant.

"If you're only going after the local market, it can be more like an electronic brochure," he said. "If you're trying to reach national and international customers, it needs to be more elaborate. The cost goes up depending on whether it includes certain features, such as animation."

Chumas estimated that a bare-bones Web site might run \$500-1,000 to set up and \$10-15 a month to host. If the site involves several pages and "flash" animation elements, it can run into the thousands to design. If you conduct sales from your site, hosting can cost up to \$70 a month.

For its monthly fee, your hosting company will register your domain name, host your server and back up your Web site data for you. Chumas recommend Host My Site (www.hostmysite.com) as a good one.

Thinking of building your own Web site? Chumas recommends Front Page or Dreamweaver software.

You might also consider hiring a talented college student to do it for a bargain price.

Whether you design your own site or hire someone, ask yourself several questions first.

- What is the site's purpose?
- Who is going to come there?
- What do you want them to find?

Chumas advises making the site as user-friendly as possible. "Less is more--keep it simple. You want a clean look, with white backgrounds and concise text. The less scrolling people have to do, the better. And your domain name should relate to your e-mail address."

Traditionally, you attracted people to your site by filling it with "meta-tags," key words that would be picked up by various search engines to send Web surfers in your direction. Chumas noted that these days Google and Yahoo also offer sponsored links, at a cost, which will pop up in eye-catching places to promote your site.

Chumas started his own company with two other partners who also come from software backgrounds. He said he tries not to complicate electronic issues more than necessary, and did an entertaining imitation of a typical "software geek" answering a simple question with a long, convoluted answer. Chumas then admitted he also does stand-up comedy, adding, "I mostly poke fun at software people."

To find out where he'll be appearing next--or get more information on his company --go to www.outsourcery.com.



Make the site as user-friendly as possible. "Less is more. Keep it simple."



Picnic!

Plan now to attend the NJCreatives picnic at the Pavilion Campsite in Silas Condict Park, right next to the building where we have our meetings!

The date is Saturday, July 26th, and the time is noon to 5pm.

More info will follow, such as food and drinks (no alcoholic beverages please).

Please mark your calendars, and let's make this a good turnout. The park, rarely seen by our members in daylight, has a lake with paddleboats, a baseball field, and a hiking trail. Our group will have a roof over our heads as well as barbecues and chairs! Good for hot or rainy weather. Bring the whole family!

From the Members

Let SWAN members know what you're up to! Report your successes, publications, deals, and other accomplishments here. If there's a Web link to your work, please include it! Send submissions to Ron Schaumburg (rons2@optonline.net).

* * *

From the President

I've said it for years, and I'll say it again; attending SWAN meetings = REFERRALS!!! A long-time attendee of our meetings referred me to one of her clients who needed a cartoonist/illustrator. After meeting with the client, and hitting it off pretty well, I was given the assignment and everyone was pleased. Plus I even got paid! A month later, that same client referred me to one of their clients who wanted to find an illustrator for a children's book, and now I'm busy drawing characters for that project.

So be sure to attend these meetings. You might have heard some of the information before — you may know how to build a resume, make phone calls, advertise your businesses, build a Web site — but the BEST advertising of all is showing up and getting to know people, and they'll remember you (and your work) when they need to hire a freelancer!

If you decide not to take my advice, that's okay. I'll just be getting more and more referrals from the meetings you chose not to attend. I'LL be there!

-- Dave McCoy, SWAN President



A Little Littman Luck

Something good happened to me recently. I got two phone calls about ten minutes apart -- one from The Reader's Digest and the other from The National Enquirer. They wanted my Social Security number because they had each bought a gag cartoon. I had been trying to sell them for two years. After months of waiting, I had suddenly landed two big sales!. As I was basking in the glory of my good fortune, I looked out of the window and watched helplessly as my neighbor backed into my parked car. Win some, lose some.

Here's the Digest cartoon, and as a bonus – no extra charge – a caricature of Al Roker I created for the Today Show.

-- Wally Littman



An Honor for Adler

SWAN member Peter Adler has been elected to serve two-year term as President of the Art Directors Scholarship Foundation (ADSF). ADSF was founded by members of the Art Directors Club for the purpose of distributing financial awards to talented and deserving students. Students are selected by their teachers. Donations to the ADSF are tax-deductible. The ADSF headquarters are located at the Art Directors Club at 106 West 29th Street in New York City.



Watkins Dances with Devils and Dragons



DANCE WITH THE DRAGON, the first novel by Eileen (E. F.) Watkins, is now available from Amber Quill Press, via the web site, www.amberquill.com. Click on Catalogue and scroll down to Horror, or click on Authors and then on her name. It is published as a e-book or print-on-demand paperback. In conjunction with its publication, Eileen took part in the JerseyDevilCon 3 convention at the Raritan Center Sheraton in Edison, April 25-27. Along with fellow members of Garden State Horror Writers, she staffed a table selling their published works, and appeared on panels to discuss such themes as "A Love Affair with Classic Monsters" and "Crossing the Genres: SF, Mystery, Fantasy and Horror."

To whet your appetite, here's the plot summary:

Peggy Walsh, the teenaged daughter of Senator Dan Walsh, is kidnapped into a dangerous cult, the Church of Eternal Life. When the FBI tries to get her back and fails, the senator accepts help from super-psychic Dr. Armand Renascut. Renascut warns him that cult leader Stephen Farkas may possess real supernatural powers—that he and some of his followers may at least “believe” they are vampires—and that they can be defeated only by special weapons.

Although Walsh learns that Renascut was dismissed from a top-secret Pentagon program because of bogus credentials, he still hopes the mysterious psychic can help him mount another assault on the CEL compound and rescue Peggy. But can Renascut be trusted? Who is he, really, and just how much does he have in common with the cruel Farkas? Only one person knows—Kat Van Braam, Renascut's beautiful partner, who is risking her life daily to keep him “on the side of the angels.”

* * *

Deb Does Digital

I have a couple of new websites members can check out to see more of my work. This is a 3-month test to see if the site is worthwhile but I already got one call from this and I just put the sites up a week ago.

<http://www.portfolios.com/DebHoeffner>

<http://www.portfolios.com/Hoeffner>

-- deb hoeffner



[From Portfolio to Website](#)

More than a few people told our President, Dave McCoy, that he really needed to update his portfolio samples on the NJCreatives.org Web site -- or better yet, launch a site of his own. His work was too good to be presented the way it was. He needed that kick in the pants -- his portfolio samples were done in 1996 and had remained unchanged.

Sure, he could have continued in the "Portfolio" manner, but he wanted to have a more professional presentation. So he made the choice to launch his own "dot-com." Although he calls his company McCoy Illustration, everyone knows him by his email address.

DaveToons.com was the obvious choice for his Web address.

Dave approached me with his dilemma: He wanted a more professional presentation -- a crisp, clean, and easy-to-use site -- but he had limited resources. He wanted no written content for the images, because, as he said, "the work should speak for itself."

We worked on a plan to fulfill his goals quickly and with the least amount of pain. He provided his logo and a few images to kick things off. I developed a "look and feel" theme and a user-friendly navigation scheme, and presented it to him for his review. Because the content is organized by category and because there are thumbnails on each sample page, you can flip through the images with ease. Take a look at his 16 samples at <http://DaveToons.com> and see what you think.

Please send your comments to Dave at Dave@DaveToons.com or myself at StanC@GraphicVisionary.com.

-- Stan Cohen

From the Editor:

As a subscriber to the New York Times, I get the juicy Sunday sections on Saturday. I treasure the Times Magazine for its regular features – Safire’s language column, the puzzle, the ethics guy. And I faithfully read the letters. I love to see different opinions on events of the day, especially when they confirm my own.

Last Saturday, while reading the letters, I notice one bearing a familiar name -- Marcia Ringel, friend and erstwhile SWAN member. Quite a coup for a writer, to land a letter in the Times! She was commenting on an earlier article, about a man whose first step after losing his \$300K-per-annum job was to cut his kids’ allowances. In her customary caustic

way, she noted how such behavior was endemic in corporate America, which preserves the perks of the powerful while shafting the small and helpless.

One reason I'm devoted to letters columns is that they changed my life. Literally.

In 1975 I was living in Los Angeles, out of college, soon to decamp for graduate school in Kansas City, and nursing a broken heart from a love non-affair. Change was in the air.

That April the LA Times ran an article saying that, although it had been five years since the Beatles broke up, they remained a powerful cultural force. I couldn't have agreed more, and I wrote a letter to say so. I mentioned that for a while during the Sixties I'd kept a tiny notebook in which I entered what I called "Beatle references" – stores named after Beatle songs ("Lady Madonna Boutique," "Penny Lane Records"), their lyrics used as magazine headlines ("I read the news today, oh boy...") ... that kind of thing. On my best day I recorded eight such sightings.

The paper printed my letter. A few days later – I was literally packing to retreat to KC -- I got a phone call from a woman I'd never spoken to. A New York writer, she'd been in Los Angeles on the Johnny Carson show, plugging her new novel. The day she flew home she happened to be reading the LA Times, and she'd spotted my letter. Since she knew my name, she looked up the number. Turns out she'd also just launched a publishing imprint specializing in rock 'n' roll books. Oh, and she wanted to know if I might be interested in writing a book about the Beatles.

A little more than a year later, my book *Growing Up with the Beatles*, appeared.

I tell this little story as a roundabout way of urging you as a NJ Creative to take part in the Licensing Show. It's an opportunity to make yourself visible in an agora where people with products are looking for talented folks to help them make money. Even if you display just one example of your work, someone who sees it may be looking for exactly the kind of creativity you have to offer.

I got lucky – my hundred-word letter to the editor established my career as a professional writer. If you'd rather not wait for lightning to strike you, too, then make your own luck by making yourself visible at the Jacob Javits Center in June.

-- Ron Schaumburg