

September Meeting: PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER ADVISES ON REDUCING CLUTTER *By Eileen Watkins*

Are disorganization and clutter holding you back in your business? At the September meeting, professional organizer Terry Schuster gave NJC members advice on how to become “Clutter Free,” the name of her Fair Lawn-based service.

Schuster, who said she grew up in “a boring, anal-retentive family,” has worked as a professional organizer for over eight years. She holds a BA in social work and belongs to the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) and the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization. She also teaches classes at the Glen Rock Community School and the Teaneck Adult School.

She began her talk on “Organizing 101” by warning, “You didn’t get messy overnight, so you’re not going to straighten it all up overnight, either.”

Her first recommendation to someone facing a big mess is to break the cleanup process into small, manageable steps.

“If a whole area is covered with papers, the client will say, ‘I just have to lock myself in

this room for three days until I get all this done.’ That’s a horrible thing to say to yourself. Who wants to be locked for three days in a messy room?”

Instead, Schuster suggests, “Make a regular, daily appointment with yourself to straighten up. The appointment makes it real.” Each day, attack another area at a time when you’re at your best and brightest. Have a definite starting and ending time, and in between don’t take phone calls or check your e-mail. “If you just focus for half an hour, you’ll get a lot done,” she said.

Start with the most recent mess, Schuster said. Use brightly colored post-it notes to label each piece of paper as to where it should go, such as “Smith Account” or “Taxes.” You can use cardboard boxes to hold your “new” files temporarily until you get your old system in order.

“Take a hard look at everything,” she said. “People keep pieces of paper and don’t know why. As yourself, ‘Is this information obtainable from another source, such as the Internet? Studies have shown 80% of what

In This Issue:

- September Meeting Review
- October Meeting Review
- November Meeting Review
- Member News
- Share Your Successes

Contact Us:

Bill Kelly – Communications Director,
Newsletter@NJCreatives.org

Continued from page 1

is filed is never looked at again.”

She added, “People tell me they have to have everything out or they can’t find it, but you keep everything out, you can’t find it, anyway. After a while, you don’t even see it anymore.”

Schuster explained that although she usually works with clients for three hours at a time, to keep them focused, three hours is too long when you work on your own. She advised, “Be realistic—how long can you stand to be at this task? Don’t overdo, or you’ll never come back to it.”

When organizing, set your timer for ten minutes before you’re scheduled to finish, she said, so you’ll have time to straighten up after yourself.

She has found that projects with multiple steps cause her clients the most problems. She mentioned a couple of organizing products that can help—a “tickler file,” with daily and monthly dividers, and the EZ Pocket Project Organizer, which can hang on the wall or over a door to hold material relevant to a month’s worth of appointments.

Schuster notes that most of her clients have a problem keeping up with their mail— “We get more mail in a week than our grandparents did in a lifetime.” Sort your mail standing up, she said, with a trash can nearby. Re-evaluate all magazines and cancel any you don’t read. She admitted she recently canceled the New

York Times after realizing she got enough news from other sources.

She suggested opening bills right away to check for any discrepancies, then highlighting the amount and the due date. Keep all your bills together and pay them only twice a month, she said, asking a company to change its billing date if necessary. Automatic payments withdrawn from your checking account can also reduce clutter from bills.

Schuster also answered questions from NJ Creatives members on home clutter issues, such as the relative who parks possessions at your house and never returns for them. (Not surprisingly, she suggested calling the person to ask if he still wants his stuff, and offering to dispose of it if he doesn’t.)

She said a client often will ask her, “Am I the worst you’ve ever seen?” She tells them there’s always someone worse. She herself has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, and notes, “Some organizers are recovering ‘messies.’”

Besides improving your work efficiency, Schuster points out, there are psychological benefits to getting organized. “If you’re always thinking about those piles of papers, it’s interfering with your quality of life. All these things you’re not using really weigh you down.” Citing a rule of feng shui, she added, “If you don’t get rid of the old things, there’s no room to bring in new things, in a healthy way.” ■

October Meeting:

Motivational Speaker Shares Networking Insights

By Eileen Watkins

Ted Fattoross recalled his own leap into self-employment as “jumping into the abyss.” He admits that leaving his family’s business 17 years ago gave him anxiety attacks for months.

Since that time, he’s presented more than 30,000 motivational programs—about 300 a year—for groups of all sizes and all ages. He speaks on topics including sales, customer service, teamwork and leadership, for audiences that range from high school students to government officials to corporate executives.

Fattoross talked to NJ Creatives and their guests about achieving a positive balance between their personal and professional lives. When asked how he finds the energy for all of his projects and activities, he explains that he loves what he’s doing. “When you find something to die for, you never work another day in your life,” he said.

As founder and CEO of Network PLUS, Fattoross believes one of the secrets to his success has been creative networking, and noted that many people neglect prime opportunities. He recalled a networking breakfast at a New Jersey diner where most of the attendees stood around talking to people they already knew— “To me, that’s like being knee-deep in a lake of fresh water, and dying of thirst!” Fattoross approached a man with a bored, closed-off expression and complimented him on his tie to break the ice. The man turned out to be a high school principal, and ended up asking Ted to do a presentation at his school.

“My Mom taught me, ‘Never mind your own business,’” Fattoross added with a smile.

He said most people seemed to walk around

disgruntled, blaming the “wrong” spouse, job or boss. “I have zero tolerance for people who moan and groan about the boss at the water cooler,” he said. “As long as there’s a job ad in the paper, never work where you don’t have respect for the boss. We become what we believe and who we hang around with.”

To have balance in your life, he advised, you can want success, but you shouldn’t need it— “When I started out, I drove a truck, and I know I can do it again.”

“You are not your job, and your children are not their grades,” he reminded his listeners. He explained that if you over-emphasize achievement with your child, “you’ll raise a dysfunctional CEO. Striving for excellence is healthy, but striving for perfection is neurotic.”

Fattoross believes even the busiest person can find time for some volunteer work. He takes part in a program called PEAL—Phoning the Elderly to Alleviate Loneliness. He recalled feeling guilty because one woman constantly complained that Ted wanted to “fix her life.” Another PEAL volunteer advised him to “just listen,” because that alone would help the woman.

He notes that people who expect smooth sailing in life are just kidding themselves. “We’re all going to get lemons. It’s about turning them into lemonade,” he said. “I wish you a life filled with struggle—I hope you never get comfortable.”

He concluded with some words from Nelson Mandela, frequently quoted by another motivational speaker, Marianne Williamson— “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” ■

Member News:

Article reprinted from *Senior Moments*, August 2004 issue



A Cartoonist with a Dream that Never Died

Every life is filled with hard times. Hard times can come about through a difficult childhood, an uncertain world situation, hard economic times, a negative work environment, poor health... and the list can go on and on. One of the best antidotes to hard times can be humor. Finding humor during life's hard times is not always an easy task, but losing yourself, even for a brief period of time, in a humorous story, movie, television show, or a simple but succinct cartoon, can provide a welcome, much-needed diversion from the adversities that take place in our lives. Humor, and the pleasure it can bring us, should be celebrated and embraced, and the people that provide this humor, often do so while living a life complete with their own hard times.

His business card reads "Wally Littman, Humorous Illustrator", but after spending some time with Wally talking about his life, the simplicity of this title, and the long and varied path that brought him to this point, it is a story that is anything but simple. What is most surprising about Wally is his continued

positive outlook, his lifelong tenacity about success, and his courage as he pursues the career he has been dreaming of since he was a young boy. Wally Littman was born in Newark at the height of the depression. Due to hard economic times, by the time he was 12, Wally's family had moved 17 times. Whether from the stresses of life during these



times, or just from a poor union, his parents fought constantly, creating a household environment of never-ending instability, criticism,

Continued on page 7

November Meeting: MEMBERS LEARN ABOUT PROTECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY *By Eileen Watkins*

Has a client ever re-used your design for a new, more lucrative purpose without paying you accordingly? Ever not received payment

because the middleman who hired you went bankrupt? Ever been sued because you created an ad for a product that made someone ill?

In a program on “Contract Negotiation for Creative Professionals,” two professionals gave advice to NJ Creatives on how to avoid such professional disasters.

George Watson, principal with the New York firm Watson & Spierman, and president of the Society of Professional Artists Representatives (SPAR), negotiates on behalf of photographers and illustrators. Eric Vaughn-Flam, intellectual property rights lawyer with the New York firm Rubin, Bailin, Ortoli, Mayer, Baker & Fry, LLP, represents many artists and serves as special counsel for SPAR.

When Watson started his firm in the 1970s, he found many photographers and illustrators were operating without contracts. He noted that SPAR strongly encourages artists to have a contract that includes particular clauses,

and handed out examples of SPAR-approved documents.

“It’s in your interest to get to know these terms very well,” added Vaughn-Flam. He also cautioned that on a big job, the artist should have the contract reviewed by his attorney.

Watson told of a graphic designer and a photographer who collaborated on a job and ended up in a dispute over the use of the photograph in a poster. “Their agreement left out one little word—‘only,’” said Watson. “It would have allowed the photographer to restrict the ways in which his work could be used.”

Vaughn-Flam said he knew of another photographer engaged by an ad agency to do a series of photos for the Holiday Inn. After the agency went bankrupt, the photographer had trouble collecting his fee because the Holiday Inn already had paid the agency. “Always find out who your ultimate client is, and whether he’s able to pay you,” advised the lawyer.

Other tricky situations arise in the area of client approval. “If the client stalls on giving approval, the job can drag on forever,” observed

Continued page 6

Continued from page 5

Watson. “Your contract should say that approval cannot be ‘unreasonably delayed.’”

It also should state that if the client or his representative does not come along on the photo shoot, he can’t withhold payment because he’s not satisfied with the result. It should say clearly that if the work is approved, the client must pay you.

The question of whether a design is “original” sometimes causes problems. “How can you be sure,” Vaughn-Flam asked, “if it’s based on your client’s concept?”

Your contract should specify whether you or your client is responsible for getting a release for any copyrighted images you may use. If you got your idea from a stock image, you may have to pay an “inspiration fee,” a relatively new legal concept.

Watson recalled a client who created a spherical logo for a corporation; Budweiser later approached him about using it, with a bottle cap in place of the sphere. He was ready to agree until they wanted to have it shot more cheaply by another photographer. Watson warned Budweiser that would be infringement. He noted, “Comp artists have thanked me since, because swiping of images has declined in that city!”

The electronic age, unfortunately, presents new avenues for exploitation of both illustrators and writers. Vaughn-Flam pointed to the case of *Tasini vs. The New York Times*, in which the newspaper put a series of

articles by a freelancer on the Internet without offering any additional payment. The Supreme Court decided this to be a different use of the work, with greater economic benefit to the Times—since more people were paying to read the material—and ruled in favor of the writer.

“Electronic use is not automatic,” Vaughn-Flam said. “Your client has to get permission.”

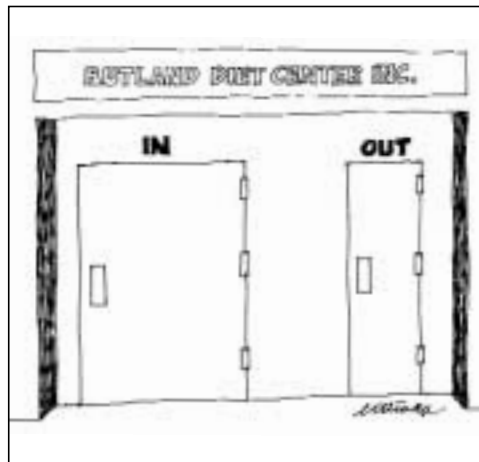
He currently is representing a photographer whose images have been re-used by one client 148 times. Although the contracts specified “one time only” use for the pictures, the photographer so far has been paid no more than the initial \$250 per shoot.

If you design an ad for a controversial employer, such as a tobacco or liquor company, your contract should have an indemnity clause. A customer who feels he’s been harmed by the product could sue everyone involved. Vaughn-Flam recommended incorporating your business so that your personal belongings can’t be attached if you’re sued for business reasons. Watson pointed out that this was another good reason to join an artists’ advocacy group.

Vaughn-Flam noted that whether you become the target of a lawsuit can have a lot to do with how much success and money you’ve gotten from the design. “Only a small percent of jobs ever become problems,” he said, “but a hundred percent of those are jobs involving a lot of money!” ■

Continued from page 4

and anger. Wally's escape was through drawing. Initially he drew what most young boys of his day drew — German dive bombers, SS troops, and other signs of the times — all in cartoon form. He found that humor was a great escape from the world around him, and eventually started drawing gag cartoons. By the time he was 16, he had gag cartoons circulating the market, and his first sale, at 17, was to *The Model Railroader*. Despite the fact that his mother felt that his dreams were "no way to make a living," he got a full time job as an associate editor with Hillman Periodicals, a comic book publisher with titles such as *Airboy*, *The Heap*, *Crime Detective*, and *Western Fighters*. His duties included copy editing, proofreading, and providing filler pages when a story came up short. As often happens in life, this smooth start to



a career goal was interrupted by a political curveball. The war in Korea was heating up, and Wally's draft number was called. During basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, he submitted some cartoons to the camp newspaper, and was soon the camp cartoonist. He provided a weekly comic strip, entertaining his fellow soldiers with the amusing points of army life. Satisfied that he had secured himself a safe position in the armed forces, complete with American soil underfoot, Wally was about to learn an important life lesson. In one of his weekly comic strips, he poked

fun at the camp commander. The very next day, he was ordered to Korea, having learned a valuable lesson — Never make fun of the boss.

Finding himself in Korea, Wally used his networking skills to see if his artistic talents could find a spot in a war zone. As good fortune would have it, he found an opening at a broadcast and leaflets outlet, and was sent to serve in Tokyo, Japan. He provided gag cartoons for two English language newspapers — *Tokyo Tickles Me* and *Jabberwocky Japanese*. He also provided caricatures for the movie reviews in *The Pacific Stars and Stripes*.

Upon his discharge, Wally took advantage of the GI Bill, and enrolled at Pratt Institute in New York City. He successfully completed a double major in Fine Arts/ Illustration and Advertising Design. During his freshman year at Pratt, he met his partner for life — a lovely, sensitive woman from Albany, New York named Rosemary Cheris. They married while still in school, and their first child was born during Wally's senior finals.

Wally knew that with a wife and child to support, he could no longer continue as a struggling cartoonist. Putting his dreams on the shelf, he set his sights on the advertising world. He began his career as a graphic designer, and has worked at many different positions within advertising, art, commercials, television, print, etc. All along, supporting his growing family. Advertising can be a highly competitive, demanding business. Oftentimes, it is necessary to switch jobs and agencies in order to move forward and advance. A good campaign can make you a hero. A bad campaign can send you to the street. Late evenings and constant travel are often the norm, and family life is frequently put on the back burner.

Over the years, Wally has worked with some big clients on well-known national accounts.

He has worked in some of the largest New

Continued from page 1

York agencies and also some smaller ones. He has partnered with others in his own agency, taken one public, been part of some buyouts, and worked freelance. Sometimes he left... sometimes he was let go. This can be the nature of advertising. Through it all, as anyone in any high pressure, fast-paced job can understand, some aspects of life are going to be neglected. He has also had two ulcers, gall bladder trouble, and what appeared to be peritonitis. He is quick to note that — money isn't everything.

About three years ago, Wally decided that advertising was no longer for him. Most of his contacts had retired, changed their line of work, or passed away. Finally, it was time. Time to give cartoons another try. Wally is now a full time gag cartoonist. He is attacking this new career, at 72, with the same work ethic he always maintained throughout his advertising career. Despite, as he puts it, "collecting rejection slips by the carload," he continues to persevere. He has had some success. He has been published in some magazines and newspapers, and even made it into *Reader's Digest*. He networks, belongs to trade associations, collects advice and encouragement from successful cartoonists, and maintains contact with old friends. Hundreds of his cartoons are out there, circulating throughout the market, with the hope of being picked-up for publication.

These days, Wally has a fantastic attitude toward life, what's important, and the people he loves. He gives all of the credit to Rosemary for the three wonderful, productive children he has, and speaks fondly of his grandchildren. He has come full circle in the hopes and dreams of his life, and he understands and appreciates his blessings. Most important, Wally Littman continues to promote humor, its healing effects, and the very necessary role it plays in our lives. ■

Member News:

Eileen F. Watkins came out with her third novel, *BLACK FLOWERS*, in December 2004. In *BLACK FLOWERS*, the wife of a (New Jersey!) biotech executive suspects her husband's company is up to no good. She decides to investigate, risking her marriage, her family and even her life. Eileen promoted and sold *BLACK FLOWERS*, along with her previous thriller *DANCE WITH THE DRAGON*, during the Philcon 2004 science fiction convention in Philadelphia, PA, Dec. 10-12. Eileen's books are available through Amber Quill Press (www.amberquill.com) as well as through Amazon. For more information, please visit her fiction web site at www.efwatkins.com

This fall, Eileen received Honorable Mentions in a contest held by *Byline Magazine* for the opening chapters of two as-yet-unpublished novels, *MASKS* and *PARAGON*.





Cygnature Contributors

William Kelly – Communications Director

Julius Williams – Newsletter Designer

Eileen Watkins – Primary Writer

Eric Marks – Editorial Advisor

Published by NJ Creatives
For membership information,
please contact George Kamper at
Membership@NJCreatives.org



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Also, please pass along items that might interest your freelance colleagues, i.e., tips for working more efficiently and profitably, and resources you've found valuable.

Cygnature is always looking for contributing writers, editors, designers, illustrators and photographers. Please volunteer your time and talents!

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