

Quill

Fall 2001

AMERICAN
MEDICAL WRITERS
ASSOCIATION
Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Volume 7, Issue 3

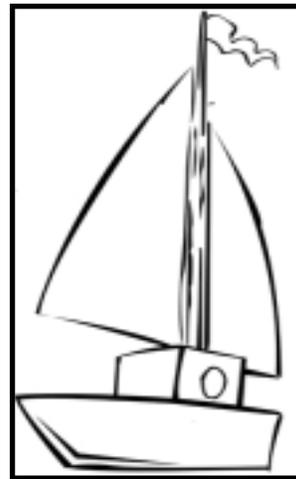
Our Chapter Needs YOU

It's no secret that the 61st Annual AMWA Conference is going to be in Norfolk. It's hard to believe that a year has passed since the local arrangements committee was organized. The committee's goals are to provide excellent service as the host chapter; to use resources, especially volunteers, efficiently; and to have fun. As October approaches, it's obvious that additional volunteers are needed to realize these goals.

Regardless of whether you plan to volunteer, please consider attending the annual conference. If you have been to an annual conference, then you are familiar with the outstanding educational, networking, and social opportunities. The registration program that was mailed in August confirms that this year's conference is no exception. In fact, this year's conference might be better because it includes a new series of how-to sessions coordinated by chapter member Marilyn Mendelson; these sessions will be scheduled throughout the conference. Another chapter member, Christina Israel, is chairing a session entitled, "The Stigma of Disease: Fighting the Unknown Battle," which will be on Thursday afternoon. Finally, past chapter president Eleanor Mayfield is chairing the freelance section, which will be held on Saturday morning.

Dinner on the Docks

You are invited to a special treat (NOT in the AMWA conference program) on Thursday evening immediately after the chapter socials. Mid-Atlantic chapter members are invited for light waterside cuisine served from the Cinderella, a 36-foot sailboat owned by chapter member Cindy Hamilton and her husband, Raleigh. The sailboat will be docked behind Waterside, only a block from the convention hotel. If you like Baltimore's Inner Harbor, you'll like



Norfolk's Waterside because the same architect designed these two complexes of restaurants and shops. Instead of eating at a traditional restaurant, you can dine, network with old friends, and make new ones as you watch boats and other harbor activities on the Elizabeth River. The cost will be only \$10.00 per person.

(Continued on page 2)

Save the Date



Our fall event will be held on Saturday morning, September 29th, 2001 at the National Museum of Health and Medicine, located on the campus of Walter Reed Hospital. We will have a short tour of the museum and a talk by Paul Sledzik, who is a forensic anthropologist and a curator of the museum, followed by lunch. The tentative title of the talk is "Interpreting the Dead: Modern Disasters and Historical Mysteries." It's sure to be a lively morning!"

— Susan J. Atlas, Ph.D., President-Elect

Money and Fun

The Mid-Atlantic chapter is pioneering a new fundraiser at this year's conference. There are two reasons to be enthusiastic. If history is any indication, our raffle will be fun. Drawings for free door prizes have been popular events at previous annual conferences, so our fundraiser is modeled after the door prizes. Another reason for enthusiasm is the likelihood of financial success. Did you know that some chapters are still trying to sell t-shirts and other leftovers from annual conferences? Therefore, the fundraiser committee is minimizing expenses by soliciting books donated by publishers. (See fundraiser article on page 5.)

Southern Hospitality

Please volunteer for an hour or two at the hospitality table to be staffed by our chapter during the conference. If you've attended other large conferences, you know the value and comfort of local information. Conference participants will be looking for directions to restaurants, attractions, and convenience stores near the Marriott Hotel. Brochures about those types of businesses will be available at our table, as will raffle tickets for our chapter's fundraiser. As we learned at the annual

meeting in Baltimore in 1995, the hospitality table becomes a focal point for conference participants when they need information.

After you register for the conference, check your schedule to see when you are available. Then contact Linda Kesselring in Baltimore at 410/328-7449 or lkesselr@som.umaryland.edu to place your name on the hospitality table roster. Please sign up even if you're not from Norfolk. We promise to orient you to the materials and information at the table so you will be well able to assist other conference participants.

Spread the Word

Even if you can't attend the annual conference, please tell your friends and encourage them to attend. For more information on the annual conference, including frequently asked questions, go to <http://www.amwa.org>. The web site also has a fact sheet on Norfolk with handy hyperlinks prepared by chapter member Elizabeth Henry. The summer issue of the *AMWA Journal* has an article on Norfolk written by chapter members Julie Basco and Cindy Hamilton.

— *Cindy W. Hamilton, PharmD, chair
Local Arrangements Committee*

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SEE YOU IN NORFOLK!

Welcome, New Members!

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter extends a warm welcome to our newest members:

Sumita “Su” Banerjee, originally from Binghamton, New York, now resides in Alexandria, Virginia. She received a BS in biology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, and intends to pursue a master’s degree in environmental science (for which she completed course work at Indiana University Bloomington). Su enjoys medical writing, technical writing, environmental consulting, and doing research associate and “think tank” type work for liberal arts firms. Her professional interests center on marketing and sales and her academic interests on chemistry and management. She, of course, enjoys the communications field immensely and has a passion to lead and influence people. She also enjoys poetry and social activism.

Steve Mitchell has been writing about medical science for more than seven years. Currently, he serves as a correspondent for WebMD in their Washington, DC, bureau. Steve has written for numerous medical publications, including the *Pink Sheet*, *Reuters Health*, *The Lancet*, and the NIH magazine *NCRR Reporter*. Steve holds an MS in physiology from the Medical College of Virginia and a BS in biology from Virginia Tech. He spent time in a PhD Biology program before trading a life at the bench for a career as a journalist. He lives in Washington, DC, with his dog, Coltrane.

After studying biology and neurophysiology, **Helen Ochej** pursued pharmaceutical and basic medical research. As a team member, she edited, proofread, and wrote portions of research papers in

preparation for journal publication. She also published a monthly newsletter for the Tumor Research Facility, which she supervised at the University of Rochester. Marriage and motherhood influenced her to consider a home-based job, and she changed her career to medical indexing. For the past 15 years, Helen indexed medical journal articles for the MEDLINE database at the National Library of Medicine. Her article about MEDLINE indexing was published recently in the American Society of Indexers newsletter, *KeyWords*. She also teaches workshops on indexing topics. After reading and indexing thousands of papers written by others, Helen decided to do more writing of her own upon retirement. She anticipates that AMWA membership will help focus her ideas and skills.

Franca R. Zaretsky, PhD, is a full-time postdoctoral fellow at the University of Virginia and has worked part-time as a freelance medical writer for more than two years. Although her degree is in microbiology and immunology, she has written on topics such as antimicrobial therapy and antimicrobial-resistant bacteria, gastro-esophageal reflux disease and dyspepsia, contact dermatitis, herbal therapies, Alzheimer’s disease, and cardiovascular disease. Franca’s portfolio includes review articles, original manuscripts, slide and poster presentations, meeting abstracts, and monographs. Outside research and writing, she spends most of her time training for triathlons. She joined AMWA for more writing contacts.

— compiled by Linda Kesselring

Freelancing in a Wired World

“Staying Afloat: Freelancing in a Wired World” is the title of the freelance plenary session at this year’s AMWA annual conference in Norfolk, to be moderated by past Mid-Atlantic Chapter president Eleanor Mayfield.

The session, which takes place from 9-10:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 27, will explore two issues confronting freelance medical writers in the “wired world.” Electronic mail has quickly become an indispensable tool for establishing and maintaining client relationships, but the dynamics of communication by e-mail are very different from those of communicating face-to-face or even by phone. We will learn how to make optimal use of this communication medium and avoid its pitfalls.

Meanwhile, many freelance medical writers who found lucrative work providing content for a burgeoning number of health and medical Web sites are now smarting financially as those Web sites have succumbed to the crash landing of the “Internet economy.” We will learn where health and medical content on the Web is headed and where the opportunities for freelance medical writers are now.

Speakers: “Using E-mail Effectively to Communicate with your Clients”

— *Marilyn J. Wells, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Hampton University, Hampton, VA*

“Freelance Medical Writing Opportunities on the Web: Where Are They Now?”

— *Daniel J. DeNoon, Senior Medical Writer, WebMD, Atlanta, GA*

Writers needed!

- The *AMWA Journal* welcomes articles on topics of interest to medical writers. See the submission guidelines on the inside back page of the journal, or contact *Journal* editor Robert Jacoby (410/552-5065; rjacoby@jhuccp.org) to discuss an article idea.
- The *Quill* needs writers to submit articles or volunteer to write assigned articles. Contact newsletter editor Karen Harrop (410/296-1737; kharrop@erols.com)

Please let us have your e-mail address!

To reduce mailing expenses, the chapter would like to communicate with members by e-mail as much as possible. If you have not given your e-mail address to AMWA, please send it to Michael Altus, MichBALT@aol.com. Also, if your e-mail address has changed, please send Michael your new address to avoid bounced messages. Thank you!

Mid-Atlantic Chapter Fundraiser

New century, new idea! Our chapter is holding a new fundraiser this year at the annual conference in Norfolk, a book raffle. This fundraiser should be fun because it is modeled after the popular drawings for door prizes. This fundraiser should also be low cost and low risk because prizes will be donated, so we don't have to worry about unsold t-shirts or fanny packs.

We've already gotten some great book donations as prizes: *AMA Manual of Style*, *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, *DiPiro's Pharmacotherapy*, *Pharmacist's/Prescriber's Letter Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database*, the *Editorial Eye* newsletter, and others.

We'll sell raffle tickets at the chapter hospitality table in the registration area. We also need chapter members to sell tickets. We'll have badges that will identify you as a Mid-Atlantic member. The more members we have selling tickets, the greater our profits. Ticket prices will be 2 for \$1, 5 for \$2, and 15 for \$5.

Drawings will be held on Thursday and Friday evenings. You do NOT need to be present to win; in fact, Friday's drawing will be silent. Winners' names will be posted in the registration area. Winners must claim their prizes by noon on

Saturday. Any unclaimed prizes will be donated to nonprofit organizations. These and additional details will be available at the hospitality table.

Door prize drawings are entirely separate from the raffle and are the Mid-Atlantic chapter's welcome to our out-of-region members. Everyone attending the meeting is eligible for door prize drawings, which will be held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings in the hospitality center. Prizes include gift certificates to area restaurants and stores and tickets to local attractions. Winners need to be present to win.

We need your help! Do you have a contact with a publisher? If so, please ask that publisher to donate a book (or books) to our raffle. It's great publicity for the donor to a good target market. The more prizes we have, the more fun! If you have contacts with a publisher or with businesses near the Norfolk Marriott whom you could ask for books, gift certificates, or passes, please contact Gayle Scott at gscottphar@aol.com. Also, if you can donate an hour or two at the hospitality table and/or sell tickets, please contact Linda Kesselring at 410/328-7449 or lkesselr@som.umaryland.edu.

— *Gayle Nicholas Scott, Chair*
Mid-Atlantic Fundraiser Committee

Ride Sharing

Looking for someone with whom to share a room at AMWA's Annual Conference in Norfolk, Virginia, on October 24 through October 27? Are you driving and have room for passengers, or are you looking for a ride? Please contact Nancy Wachter at nancy@cpsmedia.com. Nancy will act as a clearinghouse for these types of requests, and will try to connect people who want to share a room or rides.



2001 Mid-Atlantic Chapter Conference

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter of AMWA held the first chapter conference since 1997 on June 2, 2001, at Cadmus Professional Communications in Linthicum, MD. We offered Edie Stern's "Writing and Designing Materials for Patient Education" and Edie Schwager's ever-popular "English Usage and Abusage." The conference was a success on multiple levels - the participants seemed to enjoy the workshops (at least, I didn't get any negative feedback!), the instructors were satisfied with the arrangements and organization of the conference, and - the chapter made a profit.

As a new AMWA member, I volunteered to organize the chapter conference for purely selfish reasons - I wanted to be able to take core curriculum classes close to home. Although organizing the conference required some time, the task was not as daunting as I had anticipated. Needless to say, our conference would not have been successful without the assistance of chapter members Eleanor Mayfield, Michael Altus, and Maryalice Ditzler as well as the education coordinator at AMWA national headquarters, Dane Russo.

Maryalice Ditzler generously volunteered her company's conference room for our workshops, and we plan to use the same location again next year. The following observations will be of interest to anyone wishing to participate in future conferences.

Workshop selection: One of the reasons for our success was the quality of the instructors and popularity of the courses we decided to offer. I have no doubt that all of the AMWA workshops have top-notch instructors, but for local chapter conferences I think it is important to consider the potential audience. We have decided that offering at least one required course is important to our audience; it is unknown whether we would be able to fill an advanced course.

Class size: We were allowed to have more than the standard 26 attendees for one of the classes, which was fortunate because of the intense interest shown by participants.

Location: The location close to Baltimore-Washington International Airport allowed easy access for AMWA members in most of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware, and parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Homework reminders: Since so many participants were taking the workshops for credit, we sent a homework "reminder" e-mail about 10 days prior to the due date. Not only did a couple of participants mention that this was helpful, Edie Stern commented that this was the highest "homework completion" rate she had had for a workshop.

Catering: With Maryalice's assistance, we were able to offer a nice selection of food for meals and snacks, at a reasonable cost.

Overall, I enjoyed organizing the chapter conference and look forward to doing it again in 2002!

COMING UP IN JUNE 2002:

The AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter will offer "Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors" (with instructor Jessica Ancker) and "Essentials of Copyediting" (with instructor Maryalice Ditzler) on Saturday, June 1, 2002 at Cadmus Professional Communications. (Mark your calendars now!) Any questions, comments, or suggestions about this or future chapter conferences can be directed to myself, Eleanor Mayfield (elmayfield@radix.net) or Tamia Karpeles (tamia@toad.net).

— Jennifer Sizemore,
jennifer.sizemore@worldnet.att.net



President's Message:

“...And a good time was had by all!”

Who would've thought that AA-league baseball could be so incredibly entertaining? Those of us who attended our chapter's summer fun family event now know! On July 28, AMWA folks and their significant others and offspring met at Prince George's Stadium in Bowie, MD, to watch the Bowie Baysox trounce the Akron (Ohio) Aeros. But baseball was merely the backdrop for a variety of other entertaining events offered to the 12,000+ attendees at the bottom of each inning, such as [inflatable-] cow tipping, a Frisbee throw, kids racing around the bases, a screaming contest for ice cream, and at the end of the game, a baseball toss for charity and great fireworks. Despite almost getting beamed by a foul ball (after which we scrupulously scrutinized all the lefthanders as they batted!), our group had a great time. The weather even cooperated, being uncharacteristically cool and not humid. “A good time was had by all!”

Missed the baseball fun and camaraderie? Never fear NORFOLK IS (almost) HERE! By the time most of you read this letter, you should have received your initial information packet for the October 24-27 AMWA Annual Conference in Norfolk, Virginia. Our chapter is hosting this meeting, with most of the local arrangements being taken on by the Hampton Roads area members of our chapter. If you would like to help out with any of the local arrangements, please contact Cindy Hamilton at cindy@hamiltonhouseva.com or 757/481-2799.

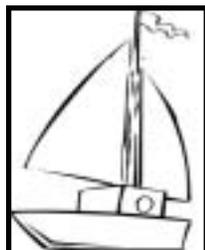
One of the many highlights will be our chapter's social gathering. Most chapter socials are held in a small room at the conference site, but not ours. Thanks to one of our board members who lives nearby, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter will hold its official gathering ON A PRIVATE BOAT moored only two blocks from the conference site!

New this year, our chapter will be sponsoring a book raffle at the Annual Conference. Proceeds from the raffle will benefit our chapter's programs, and prizes will be relevant and exciting books like Harrison's *Principles of Internal Medicine*. Book prizes will be displayed at the hospitality table so you can peruse your winnings ahead of time. Raffle tickets will be priced reasonably and may be purchased at a variety of conference locations.

Be sure to register for the Norfolk Annual Conference and to make your overnight reservations as soon as possible. When you return from Norfolk, you too will be able to say: “...And a good time was had by all!”

I look forward to meeting and talking with all of you in Norfolk. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me or any other board member with ideas or questions about our chapter.

— Donna R. Savage, *president*



SEE YOU IN NORFOLK!

Quill Editor Needed

After some five years, I find I need to resign my post as editor of the *Quill* due to personal reasons. The job is a volunteer position and requires about 10 hours per issue. The *Quill* is published three times/year. The *Quill* editor assigns articles to be written (if necessary), collects articles, edits them for grammar and style guidelines, and coordinates production with the graphic designer. The story budget for most issues is set by the board of directors; however, the editor may also include other articles of interest. If you are interested or have any questions, contact me at kharrop@erols.com.

**Have You Visited the Mid-Atlantic Chapter Web Site at
www.amwa-midatlantic.org?**

**Karen Harrop
8105 Pleasant Plains Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21286**

