

GULF COAST WRITERS ASSOCIATION

STORIES TO ENLIVEN ALL YOUR WRITING

WITH Sidney B. Simon, Nov. 19, 2011

I have always felt sorry for people afraid of feeling, afraid of sentimentality-- who are unable to weep with their whole heart. Because those who do not know how to weep do not know how to laugh either. (Golda Meir)

Elmore Leonard

He's famous for his advice for writers. In 2001, he published a piece in The New York Times called "Easy on the Adverbs, Exclamation Points and Especially Hoopedoodle."

He gave 10 rules, things like "Never open a book with weather"; "Never use a verb other than 'said' to carry dialogue"; "Avoid detailed descriptions of characters"; and "Try to leave out the parts that readers tend to skip." He wrote: "Think of what you skip reading a novel: thick paragraphs of prose you can see have too many words in them. What the writer is doing, he's writing, perpetrating hoopedoodle, perhaps taking another shot at the weather, or has gone into the character's head, and the reader either knows what the guy's thinking or doesn't care."

I'll bet you don't skip dialogue. My most important rule is one that sums up the 10. If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it."

WHERE DO FIND STORIES?

Use This list, my gift to you, Sid Simon.

THE DENTIST
K_MART
IN TRAFFIC
AT A RED LIGHT
RESTAURANT
AROUND A PHONE CALL
GETTING THE MAIL
THE MAIL ITSELF
IN A CLASS
TEACHING A CLASS
TEACHING A WORKSHOP
AT A FAMILY REUNION
AT A FAMILY DINNER.
AT A GARAGE
GROCERY STORE
CHECK OUT LINE
ON AN AIRLINER
HARDWARE STORE
GETTING SOMETHING REPAIRED
RETURNING SOMETHING AT A STORE
A PARTY
AN ATHLETIC EVENT
AT A CONCERT
WATCHING T.V.
T.V. COMMERCIALS
IN THE WOODS
AT THE BEACH
BY A RIVER
OUT JOGGING
SHOPPING
SHOWERING
COUNSELING
PARENTING
WALKING
PHOTOGRAPHING
FLOSSING
NAPING
MAKING LOVE
FIGHTING
RESOLVING A CONFLICT
HEALING
HAVING COMPANY IN
FIXING
FLOSSING
GARDENING
TRAVELING

1 The Pittsburgh House

2 Sidney B. Simon

3 My Pittsburgh house with six beds for boarders
4 had rats that skittered in the basement walls.

5 I learned to stomp coming down the worn steps
6 on my way to the toilet.

7 The boarders used the one upstairs.

8 When I coaxed him, my dad might get around
9 to putting down rat poison. Then

10 dead rats would float in the toilet.

11 Bloated, they do not flush down. I peed on them.

12 If I had to do more than pee,

13 I lifted them out by the tail,

14 stiff and dripping and tossed them

15 spiraling off the porch into the woods.

▶ 27 Which one of the following issues poses the greatest threat to the future of our planet?

- pollution of our air and water
- crime and violence
- poverty, famine, and overpopulation

▶ 28 If you were on a university campus and a riot broke out, what would you most likely do?

- join the protesting mob immediately
- run to your dorm and lock yourself in your room
- observe the action from a safe distance

▶ 29 If you were a parent, what would be the most horrendous news you could hear about your son or daughter? Would the sex of the child make any difference in your order of priorities?

- that he/she is sexually promiscuous
- that he/she is a kleptomaniac
- that he/she plans to drop out of school

▶ 30 As you grow toward middle age and older, what physical or medical concerns will you worry about?

- cancer
- heart attack
- gradual loss of vision

▶ 31 In what Federal Funding Program areas would you prefer to have cutbacks made?

- defense budget
- educational programs and research
- economic aid to foreign countries

▶ 32 Which would you rather be?

- a black American
- a black African
- a black European

FROM JOHN UPDIKE'S NOVEL, "Gertrude and Claudius"

O the days, the days in their all but unnoticed beauty and variety—days of hurtling sun and shade like the dapples of an exhilarated beast, days of steady strong cold and a blood-red dusk, tawny autumn days smelling of hay and grapes, spring days tasting of salty wave-froth

and of hearth-smoke blown down from the chimney pots, misty days of sifted sunshine and gentle fitful rain that glistened and purred on the windowsill like a silvery cat, days of luxurious tall clouds that brought thunder east from Jutland, days when the shoreline of Skåne lay vivid as a purple hem upon the Sund's rippling breadth, days of high ribbed skies like an angel's carcass, December days of howling sideways snow, March days of hail from the north like an angry knocking at the door, June days when greenness smothered every vista, days without qualities, days with a hole in the middle, days that never knew their own mind and ended in insomnia, days of travel, days of ceremony when she and Horwendil were fixed in place like figures beaten in brass or else over-animated like actors, dancing through sheets of candlelight and forests of food, wash days when amid laughter and lye she slaved with the red-handed wenches in thrall to Elsinore, sick days when she floated in a fever and received a parade of soft-spoken visitors one of whom might be faceless Death taking her to join Rorik and Marlgar and Ona, Ona who had died when younger than she, and then days of tender recovery, days when beech trees were in long red bud and the willows yellow, days when a serving-girl dropped a stillborn child, days when Horwendil was absent, days when she and he had made love the night before, days when she ate too much, days when she light-headedly fasted, days that began with the Sund glazed like a lake of mercury beneath a pearly dawn, days when wind whipped spray from wild waves like flares of white fire, menstrual days, saints' days—the

days passed, and Gerutha felt them stealing away with her life, all the while that she moved through such activities and engagements as befitted a Scandinavian queen, helpmate to a handsome blond king who with the years grew ever more admirable and remote, as if enlarging as he receded from her.

It tells the story of all that happens BEFORE the play, Hamlet, opens. This section is all ONE SENTENCE.

"TOO MUCH SUN"

By Dave & Lee Horton of Sanibel Print & Graphics

What response do you get when you let a car in on Periwinkle way?

<p>The wave</p> 	<p>The Grouchy no-response person</p> 	<p>The casual hand-flip</p> 
<p>Blowing Kisses</p> 	<p>The mystery person behind tinted window</p> 	<p>The thank-you person</p> 

1. I'M THE CHEAP GRANPA
2. IDEAS ABOUT BIRTHDAY PRESENTS
3. COUNTY FAIR
4. THE MOUNTAIN BIRTHDAY PRESENT
5. LAUNDRY
6. AT THE FLEA MARKET
7. GUESS WHAT?
8. HALLOWEEN
9. AT THE DUMP
10. THE BIRD FEEDER
11. AT THE SALVATION ARMY
12. RELIGION AT STARBUCKS
13. CORN
14. CONTEST
15. CAMP
16. BAND
17. THE INTERVIEW
18. MAGIC
19. GRANPA FULFILLS THE CONDITION
20. PEACHES
21. LIBRARY
22. GRANPA GETS HELP ON A PERSONAL
23. IT HINGES
24. DOUBT
25. CHEAP GRANPA AT THE POST OFFICE
26. GRANPA AND SOPHIA GO TO A RESTAURANT
27. OFF TO DO A MITZVAH
28. GRANPA, SOPHIA AND THE SMOKER
29. CIRCUS
30. VALIDATIONS DEFINED AND IN ACTION
32. THE TRAFFIC COP
33. TIME FOR HELMET DAY
32. LEAVING FLORIDA
32. NOT REALLY
32. CHEAP GRANPA AND THE CALL CENTER MIRACLE
34. YOGURT AISLE
35. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
36. CHEAP GRANPA AND THE FIRST SNOW
37. DOCTORS
38. CHEAP GRANPA AND THE CRUISE SHIP
39. CATASTROPHE
40. PROCRASTINATION

(5)

A PLANNING BOARD GRID

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.
7.	8.	9.

FINDING OUR PRIORITIES:

KNOWING WHAT WE REALLY, REALLY REALLY WANT!

INFORMATION: www.simonworkshops.com AND www.valuesrealization.org
Dr. Simon's EMAIL: compdr1@juno.com (Write to him about this Workshop)

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT STORIES IS:

(6)

Band

**They have dialogue. Readers like "DIALOGUE."
It has to be honest. It can be funny, it can be sad.
Crisp is good. Unadorned is better. Real is best.**

By Sid Simon

This is from THE CHEAP GRANPA IN ACTION

One of the grand kids was in his Junior High School Band. He loved to show off for Cheap Grandpa, playing his saxophone for him every chance he could. And that was of course, because Grandpa made such a big production out of every note.

"Oh, great, what a horn blower you are. Every jazz man in town would be jealous hearing you blow those notes, kid. Stan Getz would hang up his horn in envy. Benny Goodman would take his tenor sax to the pawn shop in utter despair."

"Grandpa, Benny Goodman played the clarinet, not the saxophone."

"Clarinet schmarinet, you'd blow the reed out of any mouth piece. Damn, you're good, kid."

"You mean I'm damn good, Gramps."

"Don't let your parents catch you swearing, just keep playing them sweet notes."

"Well, Grandpa, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"What, sweet notes? Now, if this is all leading up to something having to do with money, I don't want to hear about it."

The kid did a sweet riff on "Taking the A Train." And finished with a few wild notes from the overture from "The Music Man."

"It's just this, Grandpa. The school says I've been using their saxophone for two extra semesters and it's time for me to get my own."

"What kind of school counts semesters for a genius like you? What if they had said that to Thelonius Monk?"

"Gramps, I don't think he ever used a school saxophone, and anyhow, I think the school's right. It's time. And the best thing of all, there's another kid in the band who just doesn't have the lips, Gramps, but, he sure does have a very, very sweet horn."

Gramps interrupted, finishing his sentence. "And he wants to sell it to you very, very cheap, am I right?"

"Gramps, how did you ever guess?"

"Yeah, yeah," Cheap Grandpa said, "but how cheap?"

"So cheap it wouldn't even take that bulge out of your wallet, Grandpa."

"So, how cheap is that?"

"So cheap, you wouldn't even believe it comes with a case."

"Looking better, but come on, how cheap is that?"

"So cheap it comes with the two mouth pieces and three boxes of reeds."

"Now you're beginning to make some sense. But we have to do a little bargaining. Could he be convinced to swap you that very old and imperfect student model saxophone for a very nice German racing ten speed bike I just happened to have acquired."

"No, Gramps, he's not very athletic. He wouldn't be interested in a ten speed bike. Even one that won the Tour de France, which I know that one probably didn't."

"Ok, I get it, but how about a size thirty-nine three piece guaranteed seer sucker suit, perfect for summer evenings and ball room dancing up at the lakeside Dance Hall."

"He doesn't dance. No, Gramps, he only wants money."

"Money, he wants?"

"Yes, Gramps, money. But cheap money of course."

"It's not even a question, but just how much do you have in order to buy this gem of a saxophone you are so hungry to own?"

“That’s just it, Gramps, I don’t have a cent.”

“What, you spent all your bar mitzvah money already?”

“Gramps, you know I was never bar mitzvahed. My dad, your son, like you, doesn’t believe in that stuff.”

“So, your First Communion money? How about that?”

“You know my mom, your favorite daughter-in-law, who was never a Catholic, doesn’t believe in that stuff either. So there’s no money coming in from either source.”

“How about the source of you working? Get a saxophone money making job.”

“I’m too young for that, Gramps. You have to be sixteen to get any kind of real job.”

“You could work in the coal mines. They don’t care if you lie about your age in West Virginia.”

“Please, Gramps, get serious. We got a problem here. That really great saxophone is only a hundred bucks. And please, Grandpa, don’t start telling me how you sewed buttons on coats in the cellar of your tenement just to eat. I respect that, but it ain’t going to help us get a saxophone.”

Gramps looked at him, reached out and rubbed his crew cut head. “Who said we ain’t going to get a hundred dollar saxophone. Would he take fifty bucks if we paid him cash, no check, no credit card, cash?”

“No, Gramps, he expects cash, and the price is a hundred bucks. Hey, I saved my parents money on this really close crew-cut hair-ruining job that will last all summer.”

“That’s good, horn man, but, how about the kid getting seventy-five bucks and a bike and a three piece seersucker suit thrown in?”

“No, gramps, a hundred genuine green backs. That’s it. But don’t forget the case, and the reeds that come with it.”

“Well, I’ll have to think about it.”

“Oh, Gramps. Please think about it fast. Some other kid’s going to have parents who are going to buy it for him. I know.”

“What, someone who can’t blow ‘In the Mood’ is going to get it? Someone who hasn’t memorized the theme to ‘The Phantom of the Opera’? OK, the answer is, yes, I’ll take out a loan on my house and come up with the hundred bucks, but you have to agree to do something for me.”

“Gramps, wait a minute, you have to take out a loan, a loan on your house, to come up with the money? I can’t have you do that.”

“Hey, I’m just pulling your spit valve. I got the hundred dollar bill right here in the bulge in my wallet, like you said. But you do have to agree to something I need.”

“Oh, boy, thanks, Gramps. I’ll call the kid immediately. Ok, ok, but, first, just tell me what it is you need.”

“I like that you worry about me, too, just like I worry about you. Well what I need is for you to learn John Denver’s ‘Annie’s Song.’”

“Sure, Gramps, sure. I know I can learn it. If you can hum it, I can learn it. But, how come? I hear it’s something they play at weddings. What do you need me to learn how to play ‘Annie’s Song’ for?”

“It’s for my wedding. We both love that song.”

“Gramps. Gramps. You’re getting married? You found someone willing to go along with your cheap ways?”

“What, what? You make it sound like a miracle has happened? Of course I found someone. We have a lot in common. She’s one of the check-out persons at ‘Deals and Steals, The Liquidation Center of All Liquidations.’”

He takes out his wallet. “Just kidding. Hey, will five twenty dollar bills buy the miracle horn? If so, here they are. Can’t wait to hear the first tune you’ll blow just for your formerly cheap Granpa.”