

APPEARED IN THE TENNESSEE WRITER, 1999, WRITING PARENT, JULY 2001,  
AND SENIOR LIVING, JUNE, 2004

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### **Desperately Seeking Publication**

Like Rip Van Winkle, I suddenly awakened after a twenty-year period and realized I had written nothing in the interim – except for grocery lists and checks. Whatever happened to my dream of becoming a writer? The same thing that happened to my waistline - it just disappeared.

Determined to start afresh, I attended a local writing conference. There I met other aspiring writers and inspiring workshop leaders. A well-known editor critiqued my manuscript and gave me valuable feedback. By the end of the conference, I was as saturated with ideas as a sponge full of water and anxious to squeeze them out.

I then took some specific steps to help me embark on my writing career. I subscribed to several writing magazines, joined two writing groups, and, most importantly, committed myself to write at scheduled times. Off went the television, and on went my computer.

This routine began in May and within a few months, I had submitted over 27 poems and articles for publication. I expected a few rejections, but after the 27<sup>th</sup> rejection letter in a row, I felt rejected, dejected, and discouraged. No one would even accept one of my short fillers. Then my luck changed. I still received more rejection letters, but some of them now included handwritten notes from editors. I began to feel more hopeful. At least someone was actually reading my work.

Finally, an encouraging letter arrived. Although it was yet another form rejection letter, this one included a handwritten note on the bottom of the page from an editor named Betsy at *Field and Stream Magazine*. Although her words chided me for not paying more attention to the magazine submission guidelines, Betsy actually wrote the word ‘retry’ at the end of her scribbled note. Yes, I thought, she liked my piece. This was my big break. Someone from a nationally known magazine had recognized my talent, and my name would soon be a household word.

I danced with excitement as I shared the good news with my husband. Then I kissed the letter and reverently stuck it in my pocket so I could read and reread that magical word -- ‘Retry.’ That evening I sat in my armchair and gazed lovingly at the editor’s encouraging note. Suddenly, I noticed the word ‘Retry’ in another spot on the letter – in the signature block. I glanced at the editor’s first name – Betsy. I looked again at the handwritten note at the bottom of the page. To my horror, I realized that the word scribbled under the note didn’t say ‘Retry’ at all; it said ‘Betsy.’ In my desperation to be published, I had misread the editor’s signature.

My hopes of fame and fortune popped quicker than a balloon. Once again I sat down at the computer and prepared a new query letter for the next editor’s response. Perhaps this editor really would accept my submission or, at the very least, invite me to ‘Retry.’