

East Tennessee Writer/ 2013/The Procrastination Predicament/Judy L. DiGregorio/565 words

When I have less than 24 hours left to meet a writing deadline, I am as jumpy as a kangaroo rat in a room full of cats. Ideas tumble around in my head like bingo balls in a metal cage as I mentally kick myself for procrastinating again.

I don't procrastinate quite as much in the winter as I do in the spring when blue skies and balmy breezes tempt me to take long walks at the marina where I can watch the great blue heron fishing along the bank or the rowers skimming across the lake. I also enjoy sitting on my back deck observing the nuthatches, chickadees, and goldfinches. The only thing I don't enjoy this time of year is parking myself at the computer and writing.

Part of my problem is I write over 50 columns per year so a deadline dangles in front of me almost every week. I do press releases for the Oak Ridge Playhouse, humor columns for two magazines, and miscellaneous articles for other publications. If I didn't have deadlines to motivate me, I don't know if I'd ever write anything. But deadlines don't prevent me from procrastinating.

I keep notebooks in my house and purse where I jot down possible ideas for columns. I also scribble things on stray pieces of paper such as napkins, Kleenex, or the church bulletin if a notebook is not handy. Of course, those little wisps and bits of paper usually crawl away ending up on the floor where they lurk unnoticed.

After I review any other notes I can find, a new problem surfaces. I can't read them. My handwriting has steadily deteriorated since I started using a computer. Every other word I write looks like chicken scratches or hieroglyphics. I might as well be writing prescriptions for a pharmacy. Even the grocery lists I give to my husband require observation, interpretation, and translation. Though I write the lists myself, I can't read them either.

When I have plenty of time before a column is due, I choose a few ideas to investigate. Each idea gets three paragraphs to test its appropriateness for a full-fledged column. If words do not flow easily or the topic fails to retain my interest, I scrap the idea and try the next one. If I'm lucky, I will be able to flesh out a first draft in a few hours and review and edit it for several days before I send it in.

If I wait until the night before the column is due, I grab onto any idea I can find and frantically start crafting a possible column. Ill-tempered and cranky, I sit hunched over the computer typing and rewriting until the wee hours of the morning. I have never yet missed a deadline, but I have occasionally missed a good night's sleep. Once the column is on its way, I chastise myself for waiting so long and vow not to do it again.

Of course, my resolution to stop procrastinating does not last because resolutions are similar to the glass in fire alarms. They are meant to be broken.

Judy L. DiGregorio is a former KWG board member and the author of three publications from Celtic Cat Publishing: LIFE AMONG THE LILLIPUTIANS, MEMORIES OF A LOOSE WOMAN, and JEST JUDY (CD). Visit her website at www.judyjabber.com.