



A Letter from Nelson DeMille

Writing is a lonely profession. But you know that.

Lighthouse Keeper is also a lonely profession, and I'm sure there is a Lighthouse Keeper's Association so these people can keep in touch.

For us, we have Mystery Writers of America, and a few other fine professional organizations that allow us to feel we are part of something bigger than our writing space.

This is a pitch, by the way, for you to join Mystery Writers of America. I've been a member since 1976, and I've enjoyed every year, except maybe for 2007 when I was elected president and had to make my acceptance speech at the Edgar® Awards banquet wearing a tuxedo, though even that wasn't bad.

But why should *you* join MWA? Well, one reason is the aforementioned Edgar Awards banquet, held during Edgar week in New York City. It's fun and it's a tax deductible expense.

MWA, like most professional organizations, is part social, part business, and for some, it's cheap psychotherapy – a place to share frustrations and problems with other authors. It's also a place to get info about publishers and agents, and a forum to swap ideas, and to network.

If you've been in this game for awhile, you've noticed that most writers are not competitive with one another. They are, in fact, collegial and fraternal. And what I've found in my 38 years in MWA is that we all recognize that we're in the same boat, and if we all pull together, the journey will be much smoother.

For those who've already arrived, there are still good and important reasons to come aboard, which is why I've stayed a member of MWA for all these years. On that subject, the retention rate of members is extremely high, which is the best indication that this organization is fulfilling its mission and its commitment to authors.

What does MWA offer? It offers an opportunity to give, for those who can, and to receive, for those who need help and encouragement. It offers friendship, advice, a lifeline to those adrift, a reassurance that we are not alone, a shoulder to cry on, and an opportunity to corner an agent or editor at an MWA event.

Also, Mystery Writers of America looks good on your resume. Or, if you're looking far ahead, it's a good line in your obit.

Over...

MWA was the first professional organization that I joined, and it's hard for me to understand why every writer in this game doesn't belong. If you're serious about your craft, and concerned about the business end of publishing, you should be a card-carrying MWA member.

A few things to think about:

There are eleven local MWA Chapters around the country, which hold a variety of events that are interesting, informative, and fun.

Members receive the monthly newsletter, The Third Degree, which keeps everyone up-to-date, and contains useful marketing news, and columns about tax and legal matters and forensic science. You also get well-written articles by members about subjects such as how to get an agent, or how to poison your agent. Just kidding.

Active status members will have access to the MWA Membership Directory with contact info. You may, however, choose to limit your contact information, though be advised that many writers, agents, and publishers find the Directory useful for sending out Christmas cards, invitations to lavish parties, royalty checks, and unsolicited multi-book contracts. Admittedly, this doesn't happen often, but I have gotten some interesting letters through the MWA Directory.

Also, dues are cheap. This is the best professional investment you will ever make.

Members also get a neat-looking membership card with Edgar Allan Poe's face on it, and access to the MWA website, plus many other benefits, some of which are psychic.

Members also have an opportunity to submit short stories for inclusion in the annual Mystery Writers of America Anthology. I edited the 2011 edition of this anthology and I was impressed by the quality of the submissions and heartened to discover that the mystery short story is alive and well.

Also, you should know that MWA is not too hung up on genre. Meaning, if you want to join, no one is going to tell you that your novels, non-fiction, or short stories don't qualify as mysteries. We have a big tent, which includes anyone who loves the mystery. And if you haven't published a book or short story, we also have affiliate memberships for those who qualify.

Mystery Writers of America was founded in 1945, and since its founding, MWA has opened its doors and its heart to all who toil in the genre, providing a spiritual home, and a sense of community and lasting fellowship.

The publishing business, as we all know, has gone through some dramatic changes in recent years, and it's more important now than ever for authors to come together in professional organizations where they will feel less isolated and more in control of their destinies.

In conclusion, I could also tell you that MWA members are taller, thinner, better looking and more prosperous than other writers, but that might be overstating the benefits of membership. I will promise you, however, that if you join, you'll stay.

For more information on how to become a member of the Mystery Writers of America – visit our website at: www.mysterywriters.org or call the national office at 212-888-8171.