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INTRODUCTION

Years ago, when I broke into the field, I could have used a book like this. I had a feeling as I was writing that the stories were not quite right. Sure I was getting praise, but I was not breaking into the markets I wanted. On the year I took off to be a freelance writer I made only \$1,200. But I never wrote just for money.

What piqued my desire for more knowledge and eventually added to my level of despair was the day I got a call from the *New York Times* travel section. They wanted to see a story I proposed on St. Lawrence Boulevard in Montreal.

It was a great street where waves of immigrants had lived. It had all the elements of a great feature story for the travel pages. But I didn't capture them. Upon receiving the story the editor of the section wrote back: The story had no redeeming values, and the photos weren't very good either.

I was devastated. I was ready to quit the business. Eventually I sold the story to *Newsday's* travel section, but the incident reinforced what I already knew: something was wrong with my writing. I finally went back to school and got an M.A. degree in nonfiction writing from the University of New Hampshire.

It was a great education, mainly because I got to write and experiment daily for two years. At the same time I received continuing criticism and advice from some great writers and teachers like Don Murray, whose "Memo to a New Feature Writer" is in the lead chapter.

Since the devastating day of the *New York Times* rejection, I have done all right. My writing has improved, and eventually I became editor of the feature section for *The Allentown Morning Call*, later Sunday magazine editor for the *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, and then editor of *Minnesota Monthly*, a regional magazine in Minneapolis.

I still have my share of self-doubts about my work. And from time to time I love to sit down with colleagues and talk about the finer points of writing and editing. Then came the idea for the book. By contacting the best writers, editors and teachers to ask them to write for this book I could figuratively sit down with them whenever I chose and share their vast understanding of feature writing.

At the same time, the book makes it possible for everyone else interested in feature writing to pull up a chair with those people and share in their years of experience and knowledge.

Five years of editing *Style*, *The Journal of the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors*, has assured me that there are many great feature writers, editors and teachers with plenty of tips for new and aspiring writers as well as for accomplished writers.

Their words will teach novices new ways to practice their craft and they will remind the experienced writer how many different ways there are to approach feature writing. For me, putting the book together was an experience much like feature writing itself. I was learning while spreading the good word to others.