

to medical/technical writers and self-employed individuals is led by a participant. Past discussion topics have included troubleshooting Microsoft Word problems, time tracking, writing for mobile devices, retirement options for the self-employed (presented by two local financial planners), working remotely, contracts and letters of agreement, *LinkedIn.com*, new Internet technologies, visual communication, and dictation software. Jan Niehaus, president of Communication by Design and a regular attendee, says, “TechWrite STL has attracted a group of talented and resourceful writers, editors, book developers, publishers—all professionals who generously share their experience, suggestions, referrals, and sometimes projects.”

Participants always leave with new information and ideas. Jo Seltzer, a regular attendee, says, “I have, of course, learned a lot from the luncheons. But getting to know other freelance writers and feeling that I could call upon them for information or support is what I value most. Being a freelancer can be isolating, so I welcome a regular forum—and the new friends.” Alice Fugate says, “I always find our lunch meetings helpful.... Our meetings are a great way to share information with colleagues, get feedback, and appreciate new perspectives. Even if the specific topic we’re discussing that day doesn’t seem relevant to

my situation, I find that I always come away with something new. And, they’re just plain fun.” Patrick Dorsey comments, “Aside from the insights and tips I’ve picked up on everything from research to editing to crafting tag lines, what TechWrite STL provides me the most is a sense of community. Writing by its nature is a very solitary pursuit—even in tech writing, writers only interact with SMEs to gather information before returning to an isolated spot to compose whatever project they’re on. But at six meetings a year, I get the opportunity to share experiences, gripe about types of clients, learn something new about writing or the writing business, and just *talk* with other professional writers facing and solving some of the same issues I encounter in my work. It’s valuable, and I just wish I had the daylight in my schedule to attend every time.”

Lisa and Joanne have remained coordinators of the series, taking turns finding topics and discussion leaders, arranging dates and locations, and notifying the members and collecting RSVPs. By taking turns, neither feels overwhelmed and there is always a backup in case something happens.

An unexpected benefit has been the network of writers and editors we all now have to turn to for advice and support. In September 2007, Joanne “practiced” her AMWA annual conference presentation at

the luncheon and received excellent feedback that allowed her to improve the presentation. In early 2012, Lisa had some contract issues with a client and she was able to get a “reality check” from other members. In between meetings, members of both groups often email each other for advice and opinions. Both leaders actively solicit new local technical writers to join the mailing list.

When we describe this group, many people don’t believe that we actively refer jobs to each other instead of competing for them. In most cases, we each have our own area of expertise so we don’t overlap. In fact, many members have paired up to work on projects together where neither one had the expertise to do the entire thing alone.

Overall, this connection has proven beneficial for everyone involved, and the group as a whole is much stronger than either group would have been on its own.

See www.stc-stlouis.org/cicsig.html for a full list of past meeting dates and topics. **f**

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In Memoriam: A. Stanley Higgins, 1922–2013

BY EDWARD A. MALONE | Senior Member



A. STANLEY HIGGINS (or Stan, as he was known to his friends) passed away on 3 March 2013 at the age of 90. He was a charter member of

STC, editor of the Society’s journal

from 1961 to 1976, national president in 1979–1980, and a frequent speaker at the Society’s annual conference. In fact, his affiliation with STC spanned nearly 60 years. But it was in his role as editor of the Society’s journal that he made his most important contribution to the Society and the profession. He was brought in as a “friendly undertaker” to phase out the journal, but instead he became its lifeline for 15 years.

Born in Chattanooga, TN, on 25 August 1922, Arnold Stanley Higgins attended Tennessee Tech, majoring in

English in order to pursue his interest in journalism. His studies, however, were interrupted by his military service in the Philippines during World War II. After his discharge from the army, he returned to Tennessee Tech and changed his major to electrical engineering to capitalize on his military training. He could not abandon journalism, however. He served as editor of the college newspaper and transformed it into “one of the finest college newspapers in the country” (D. K. Higgins).

“Stan Higgins was one of STC’s most prominent members and one that the Pittsburgh Chapter can be proud to claim. I knew him well; in fact, he steered me to a couple of my early jobs and set me on the path to a great career in technical writing.”

—Janis Ramey, STC Fellow

When he graduated in 1948, Higgins was recruited by a friend to supervise a small group of editors in Oak Ridge, TN. This group edited the National Nuclear Energy Series of reports about the Manhattan Project and the work of the Atomic Energy Commission. Later, Higgins worked for General Electric in Cincinnati (1955–1960) and Westinghouse in Pittsburgh (1960–1987).

In 1953, while still in Oak Ridge, Higgins became a charter member of the Association of Technical Writers and Editors (TWE), one of the organizations that would eventually become STC. From 1955 to 1956, he served as associate editor of the *TWE Journal*.

During this period, Higgins participated in discussions about the merger of TWE and the Boston-based Society of Technical Writers (Jenks). That merger led to the formation of the Society of Technical Writers and Editors (STWE) in 1957. In 1960, STWE merged with the Los Angeles-based Technical Publishing Society to form the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP). Higgins was the assistant editor of the Society’s journal when it changed names from *STWE Review* to *STWP Review*.

In 1961, an external review board recommended that the *STWP Review* be discontinued in favor of an

expanded newsletter. The editor was irate and resigned on the spot. The Board of Directors asked Higgins to take over: “I was to be sort of a ‘friendly undertaker’ for the *Review*, charged with officiating over its final few issues. But to paraphrase Mark Twain, its demise was greatly exaggerated. Consequently, the friendly undertaker stayed on for 15 years” (Malone).

Higgins saw the journal through several name changes—from the *STWP Review* to *Technical Communications* (with an “s” on the end) to *Technical Communication* (its present name). He resigned as editor in 1976, but he remained active in STC and even served as national president for a year.

In later years, Stan was working on an autobiography. “Did I mention that it’s just a departing gift to the family?” he wrote in an email. “It isn’t finished, and maybe it never will be.” He did indeed finish the book and titled it *Seventy Years of Working with Words*. Stan was the epitome of a technical writer and editor in an era when technical communicators were, first and foremost, consummate wordsmiths. ■

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