



How to Do It

By Gary Futoma, Chapter Treasurer

Make white sauce of first 5 ingredients. Place half the potatoes in greased 2-quart casserole; cover with half the onion and half the sauce. Repeat layers. Cover and bake at 350° about 1 hour. Uncover and bake 30 minutes longer.

This is a recipe for scalloped potatoes. You may never have made scalloped potatoes before, but the implicit promise of a recipe is that you can turn out a credible dish by following the instructions.

This is the reason we commonly think of for having procedures: to enable us to do something that we otherwise couldn't. But there may be other reasons as well. Perhaps the task is dangerous, and the risk can be minimized or eliminated if the work is done in a specified manner. There may be different ways of accomplishing the task, and we want to ensure that the most efficient method is always used. To maintain consistent quality, it may be necessary for everyone to perform the job in the same way. Sometimes there's a benefit just in documenting the process ("I didn't know we were supposed to do that").

Writing procedures is tough work. Almost by definition the person following the procedure could not accomplish the task without our instructions. This demands writing that is clear, concise, and consistent. A reader may fail to grasp that concepts are parallel or of equal importance if we present them in different formats or styles. An expert may have no problem understanding a change in terminology depending upon the context, but

a novice may. Statements such as "At this point the relief valve should be open" may leave a technician confused (Should he open the valve now? Was he supposed to have opened it in a previous step? Was it supposed to have opened automatically?). An inexperienced worker may appreciate clarifying notes and supplemental information, but they may get in the way of an expert who already understands that and just wants to move on to the next step (and may end up ignoring our procedures as a result). At least as much as other forms of technical communication, writing procedures requires us to have a good understanding of our users, their knowledge, and the skills they bring to their work.

A Challenge

To help get you thinking about our topic, here is a little challenge:

Can you develop a procedure to answer the following question? In a triangle with 3 equal sides each of the interior angles is 60°, and in a square each of the interior angles is 90°.

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WEBSITE: www.stc-sjvc.org

Presidency Corner

By Bethany Rusbasan, Chapter President

I received a J. Peterman catalog in the mail the other day. I immediately sat down and started to read the description for each item hungrily. I stopped thinking about my plans, I stopped thinking of my to do lists, I stopped doing everything and gave—*rather this little catalog took*—my full attention. After I had devoured each word for each item I got up and went on my merry way. It wasn't until twenty to thirty minutes later I realized I was still smiling about that catalog.

If you have never read a J. Peterman catalog you are missing a very exciting reading experience. It doesn't really matter if you like any of the items he is selling (mostly clothes), it is how each item is described. The writers for this catalog bring each item alive. Yes, the description tells how the item feels and looks, but each description goes further. It shares part of the item's mysterious and exciting history, how it made and makes the owner feel, how an exciting and unexpected adventure will come upon the owners of each item. If you buy this item your life will jump in the direction you want it to take! At the beginning of the catalog it even says something about how people want to buy items that make their lives be what they wish they would be—an admission on the first page that these things are not going to change anyone's life. But, after reading about the items you don't believe it. It isn't just me; I have talked with other people and they all have

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STC Mission Statement

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

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Chipping Stones or Building Cathedrals?

by Mark Stucky, Webmaster

The September 26 meeting was small but inspirational. After a low propane tank tripled the planned cooking time, we ate some "front-yard" grilled chicken. (Apparently even low-tech items on a front porch have their share of glitches.)

Then we watched a video of "extraordinary visions" by DeWitt Jones, National Geographic photographer and last May's 48th Annual STC Conference keynote speaker. His presentation at the conference was easily the highlight of the entire event for me.

A world-class photojournalist, whose photos have been featured in National Geographic for 20 years, he illustrated his philosophy about life through many stunning images he has taken over the years. (You can peek at his work at www.dewittjones.com.)

In the video he told the story of an Italian priest who came across two workers helping to construct a building. He asked the first man, "What are you doing?" The sweating and scowling man curtly replied, "I am chipping stone." The priest then asked the

other man the same question. The second man was also sweating and doing exactly the same work as the first, but he replied with uplifted eyes and a radiant smile, "I am building a cathedral."

In our technical communication, are we chipping stones or building cathedrals? DeWitt challenged and inspired viewers to think about our vocations and lives in new ways.

(A number of people who expressed a desire to come to the meeting, couldn't make it. We might have an encore presentation in the future, or you can talk to Mark Stucky or Kirsten Klassen about borrowing the tape.)

Judges Needed

Qualified Judges are being sought for the International Technical Publications Competition (ITPC) and International Technical Art Competition (ITAC).

Now that the chapter competitions are complete, the 2001-2002 Society for Technical Communication (STC) international publications and art competitions are just around the corner. We need experienced technical communicators and visual design experts who would like to participate in the international judging for the ITPC and ITAC competitions.

Judging in the competitions is a great way to get a sneak preview on what your colleagues are doing and to network with interesting people in a relaxed, fun atmosphere. You might even learn something new!

The judges for each team are responsible for evaluating the entries and for providing each participant with constructive feedback. Awards are given to deserving entries based on the consensus of the judging team. STC will provide transportation and lodging expenses for judges to attend the consensus judging meeting in Houston, Texas, April 5, 2002.

The ITPC and ITAC judge coordinators are currently recruiting both new and experienced international judges. In addition, we want to have at least one judge from each region.

To be considered for a judge position, you

Coming Events

The following is a list of the proposed topics, dates and meeting locations for this year:

February 21, 2002

- By: Kirsten Klassen (coordinator)
- Topic: Tour of printers with graphic designer to talk about standards of quality
- Time: TBD
- Place: TBD

April 10, 2002

- By: Mark Stucky (coordinator)
- Topic: Rise and Fall of E-Commerce
- Time: TBD
- Place: TBD

June 4, 2002

- By: Perry Ballard
- Topic: Branding
- Time: TBD
- Place: Perry Ballard Offices (St. Joseph)

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President (Continued from page 2)

the same reaction, to a greater or lesser extent.

A great marketing ploy, but doesn't everything I ever see advertised try to do this? Yes, but the J. Peterman catalog does it in such a subtle, believable way that among other things it is an educational read.

So what does this have to do with anything? (Besides looking like I am trying to promote J. Peterman, which I assure you I have nothing to gain and no affiliation with the company.) As I was still smiling thirty minutes later after reading the catalog I began to think about the writing itself. The writers expressed, in a very small space and with very few words, emotion, mystery, romance, and desire; plus mundane information, the type of fabric, fabric care, sizes, and where the item is from. An amazing success; I want to buy everything in that catalog, even if I have no use or need for it.

But, for my purpose, what makes this writing speak to people? And, more importantly how can I bring that kind of life into the technical procedural manuals that I write? Of course the people have already purchased the item if they are reading the procedural manual. I certainly don't want the operator to have to wade through marketing talk to get the necessary information, but I think there is an important lesson, or for the seasoned writer perhaps a reminder, about bringing life into a technical manuscript: Write to people's senses.

It is a simple idea, and it sounds easy, but it takes time, creativity, and knowledge of the

instrument to really write what is happening and how to deal with it, all in a concise and clear manner.

Here are some questions I try to answer in my technical procedural manuals:

For the maintenance and troubleshooting parts of the manual, can I hear anything? What does the instrument sound like? Does air escape? Are there other recognizable and normal sounds that mean the instrument is running smoothly? What does it sound like if something is wrong? What is wrong? At the different points of wrong, what steps should the operator take? What are the visual cues? Are there color changes in the instrument or in the software? What can the operator do themselves, and how? When should the operator call technical support?

For the operation section, the biggest question I ask myself for each step in a procedure is, does this really tell the operator anything? What good is it to tell the operator to enter a value, when the software already says they need to enter a value? If the operator is looking in a manual for this information, they need to know more. What type of value? Are there parameters for the value? What will happen to the data depending on the value entered? Can this value be edited at a later time? What will happen?

I don't pretend to think someone is going to walk away from a technical procedural manual smiling and humming about it. But, I do think they can walk away from a technical procedural manual with concise clear information that really answers their question and allows them to quickly get back to work.

How's Your Writer IQ?

Test Your Knowledge of Common Proofreading Symbols and Terms:

_____	¶ _____	cap _____	; l _____	l = l _____
^ _____	sp _____	rom _____	: l _____	. _____
stet _____] _____	lc _____	ll _____	() _____
# _____	[_____	ital _____	bf _____	1/m _____
= _____	tr _____	^, _____	eg# _____	1/n _____

Answers next month.

November Meeting

We'll meet at Tippecanoe restaurant in South Bend at 5:30 for a social "hour" (or at least 45 minutes worth), with dinner and the presentation to begin at 6:15.

Meeting Details

Date: Tuesday, November 6, 2001.

Time: 5:30 P.M.(Social Hour) 6:30 Dinner

Presenter/Host: Gary Futoma

How To... (continued from page 1)

Using only a pencil and paper, can you think of a procedure to determine the interior angle in a figure with "n" sides, where "n" may be 5, 6, 7, ... ?

Place: Tippecanoe Place, South Bend (See map) 620 W. Washington St. (219) 234-9077

RSVP: Gary Futoma (219) 234-5819 or e-mail at gfutoma@aol.com by Monday, Nov. 5



You can come in via Route 33 (933) [1]
Colfax [2]
W. Western Ave. [3]
Lincolnway West [4]

South Main [5]
South Michigan [6]

Editor's Corner

Clarification

A few questions arose over my comments in the last issue regarding changes in the format of *Watermark*. To clarify (I hope) my intention let me reassure everyone that any member in good standing who prefers a printed copy, will receive one. All you need to do is let me know that is what you want.

If you have an e-mail address and do not let me know that you want a printed copy, you will receive your newsletter via e-mail.

I hope that clears that up. Sorry for any confusion.

Newsletter Competition

I chose to bypass the STC Newsletter Competition this year. My assistant editor has other pressing responsibilities and I am in the process of changing the newsletter as I mentioned in the last issue. Since we have received an award for the last four years straight, I thought a year off wouldn't hurt. The judging committee likes to see a fairly consistent presentation and we would probably have a slightly different appearance for each issue I submitted. That would only add to the work of the judges. So, we will come back next year with an improved newsletter and see how that goes.

Region 4 Conference

I hope that everyone who wants to attend the Region 4 Conference in Kalamazoo on November 3 has made their plans. It appears that winter is moving in very quickly this year and snarling as it comes.

If you have never attended a conference, I highly recommend it, even if you can only stop by for a few hours. Conferences are a great way to network with your peers and pick up a few valuable tips at the same time.

Rants and Raves

Well, I've been thinking about the change process a bit. One of the major issues I always have to deal with is content.

Has anyone read a good book lately that you think will benefit the rest of the member-

ship? If so, why not do a brief review and send it to my office. I would be happy to print it in the newsletter and I am certain your fellow members would appreciate your insights.

If you have a topic you would like to expound upon, write it up. If you don't want to send it to the *Intercom* or the *Technical Journal*, I'll be happy to print it here if it is appropriate. Be warned though, if it is really good, I'll probably recommend you send it to a larger publication.

This has been a very long 6 weeks. The country I thought I knew has begun to change right before my eyes and I am no longer certain where I fit in.

I think, if anything, I have come to appreciate my responsibilities as a citizen of this nation. I have sent about 6 e-mails to President Bush (president@whitehouse.gov) in as many weeks. Oh, sure, I know he will probably never see them, but I am starting to change an old habit.

Complaining and doing nothing is easy. Complaining and trying to make a positive change is a lot harder and there are very few people in this world who can exercise that kind of freedom. With all the changes we are liable to see in the coming years, we need to be more active in our government than ever before if we want to preserve our freedom.

I recall a documentary about the use of surveillance cameras in the United Kingdom to deter crime. One gentlemen said something to the effect that for more security most people would give up some personal freedom. While that may be true, I do not think that I like the direction that path could take. Yes, they are small steps, but you can cover a lot of ground with a lot of small steps.

My hope is that the majority of Americans will have the courage to err of the side of the freedom we have fought so hard to keep. No, there is probably no easy or painless solution. But I believe that the nature of this country is to overcome adversity and succeed against the odds.

I just hope and pray that all of us can see the strength that we share as one nation.

Director Sponsor Notes

By Mike Bates, STC Region 4 Director-Sponsor

Report on the September 2001 Board of Directors Meeting

Following the terrorist acts of 11 September, the September 2001 STC Board of Directors meeting was held by teleconference—instead of face-to-face in Atlanta, Georgia, as originally planned—on 21 September 2001.

As a little background, like all board meetings, this one consisted of three *passes*:

- An *action* pass, during which motions are brought forth to the board. For each motion, the board either approves it (with or without modifications), rejects it or requests that the motion be restated and brought forth at a later date. Also during this pass, actions taken by the Executive Council since the last board meeting are announced.
- A *discussion* pass, during which various topics are brought forth for board consideration and discussion. Many discussion items results in action items for board and/or committee members, generally with the expectation that a motion or further information will be brought forth at an upcoming board meeting.
- An *information* pass, during which board members provide information not otherwise covered in the reports they provided to the rest of the board prior to the meeting. This is also the time for board members to ask for clarification on information presented in other members' reports.

This article reports on results of the action pass. During that pass, the board approved:

- The final budget for Fiscal Year 2002.
- The dues structure effective 1 January 2002.
- The following new mission statement for the Society-level Technical Editing Special Interest Group (SIG):

“The Technical Editing SIG provides opportunities for members to expand their editing and proofreading expertise by serving as a forum for information exchange, professional support, and interaction among the SIG, STC, and the editing community at large.”

- The dissolution of the following chapters:
 - ♦ Fitchburg State student
 - ♦ Eagle (Denton, Texas) student
 - ♦ Saskatchewan
- The following merit grants:
 - ♦ \$1,235 to the Central Ohio chapter to support its new High School Learning Program.
 - ♦ \$3,000 to the Northern New England chapter for a scholarship program at the University of Massachusetts. This scholarship will honor of Millie McGuire, founder of the chapter.
 - ♦ \$2,000 to the Atlanta chapter to create a new résumé database.
- The following loans:
 - ♦ \$3,000 to the Southeastern Michigan chapter for the Region 4 conference.
 - ♦ \$3,000 to the Canada West Coast chapter to host the Region 7 Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in November 2002, subject to formal approval of the conference budget.
- A financial recovery/special need grant of \$715 to the Netherlands chapter to cover past-due costs incurred for the March 2001 membership meeting and ensure the future of the chapter.
- An increase of the stipend for the Industry Fellowship for Faculty and for the Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals to \$4,000 each.

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- Julie Bommarito as the Program Manager for the 2004 STC Annual Conference to be held in Baltimore, Maryland.
- Rhonda Stanton for a Journal Editor Fellowship.

The Executive Council approved the following since the May 2001 board meeting:

- Pacesetter Awards for the Orlando chapter and the Mercer University student chapter. (This was a pro forma vote to acknowledge awards granted at the STC Annual Conference in Chicago in May 2001.)
- Formation of the University of Wisconsin-Stout student chapter with a \$150 start-up grant.
- Formation of the Single Sourcing SIG with a proposed first-year budget of \$1,400.

If you would like to learn more about decisions made during this or any other board meeting, or if you would like to have a motion or discussion item brought forward, please contact me. For items you want addressed at the January 2002 meeting, please let me know by early December.

By now, everyone should have gotten their Region 4 conference registration brochures in the mail. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Region 4 Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan on November 3rd. Feel free to contact Catherine Titta, Conference Coordinator if you have any questions. She can be reached at ctitta@arbor-comm.com.

See all of you next month.



Mike is the Manager of Information Architecture at Rockwell Automation and Region 4 Director-Sponsor. He can be reached at mpbates@software.rockwell.com.

Judges (continued from page 3)

must meet AT LEAST TWO of the following criteria:

- Master's degree or higher in technical communication, graphic arts or design, or a related field
- Teaching experience in technical communication, graphic arts or design, or related field (five years full-time or seven years adjunct or part-time)
- Seven years experience in the technical communication, graphic arts or design, or related field (art judges must have experience in the visual aspects of technical communication)
- Strong publishing background (for publications: 5 articles or 1 book; for art: published graphic art or document design work)
- Winner of an STC or other communication, graphic arts, or graphic design competition award
- Certification by a communication-related professional organization (for example, in the art competition, certification by or association with a graphic arts or design organization)
- Senior membership or higher in STC

To apply to be an international judge, contact Kit Brown (Publications Competition) or Patricia McDaniels (Art Competition) by December 15, 2001. You will be notified of your judging status in January, and will have approximately one month to complete your evaluations before the consensus judging meeting.

Kit Brown, P.O. Box 140092; Boise, ID 83714; (w) 208-321-4483; (fax) 208-321-4490; (h) 208-376-0224; (emails) silverwnd1@aol.com; kit_brown@lionbridge.com

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