



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

11 November 2010

Start 9:30

Present:

Beverley, Jeff, Shirley, Sandy, Karen, Marjorie, Nick, Chip, Brian, Michael, Leslee-Anne, Hazel, Heather, Naomi, Ian, Wendy, Marilyn, Dawn, Judy, Angela, Maria

Apologies:

Maria G, Richard, Gary

News:

Next meeting at Leslee-Anne's: Don't forget that our next meeting will be held at Leslee-Anne's house (Thanks Leslee-Anne). Her address is **76 Laidlaw Parade, East Brisbane**. Everyone **please bring a plate** for morning tea. If you have a folding chair that you could also bring along that would be handy too.

Out absent Treasurer: You may notice that Jeff won't be at the next meeting as he's heading into hospital this week. All the best Jeff, we all wish you a speedy recovery.

Allsorts of Allshorts: Michael came with some great news for us today. His son has a radio station called Mushroom FM with over 6,000 listeners. He's invited us to do an on-air reading to promote Allshorts. How exciting. Brian has happily agreed to do the honours of reading for us.

This year's Christmas meeting: The idea of the Redlands Sports Club has been suggested for our Christmas meeting on 9th December. Bev will be booking for around 25 people. Car pooling will be available. Everyone discuss amongst yourselves to organise.

Lots of good news: After diligently plugging away at her foodie writing career for a while, all Karen's hard work is paying off. She's now working for Gourmet Traveller (after a 2 month trial), has written the introduction for Mei Yen's Brisbane's Budget Bites book and has also been asked to submit a sample review for QLD food and wine guide. Good on you Karen, nothing can stop you now

Feature reader:**Dawn and 'A visit to the Lee Family'**

Following on from her shorter reading last meeting, Dawn read from her new novel-in-progress. Set in 1931, it follows newly qualified teacher Violet as she settles into her new school in outback Queensland. In this chapter Violet faces challenges as the children from the Lee family are not attending school.

Critique:

Dawn was interested to know whether the reading was indicative of the time. The general consensus was that it was. We could all feel Violet's terror at confronting the children's parents but she was strong and knew she had to do it. She came across as a very strong, diplomatic and clever character. There were some comments that there was some telling rather than showing in the confrontation between Violet and the children's Father, Bob and suggestions that perhaps more dialogue was needed in this section. It could also help create some more pace and tension. This led into quite a lot of chatter about Bob and whether or not he'd be more aggressive towards Violet, or if it was just in his lazy nature to not be very confrontational. Good food for thought. Overall though, the era seemed spot on... as Bev and I mentioned it seemed like an old black and white Saturday afternoon movie. It took us right back in time with beautiful imagery of the surroundings and strong characters.

Additional Readers:

We had many varied interpretations of Chip's swing photos today. Dorothy shared a sad tale about love and loss of children. Brian followed with a more vengeful take and then Chip calmed things down with a sentimental story that everyone wanted to continue. Sandy was up next and as usual had a great twist at the end. Angela followed, reading for the first time at one of our meetings (yay Angela, it wasn't that scary was it?) then Marilyn shared a whimsical fairy tale about toys. Bev finished off with a sad but very beautiful tale of parents coming to terms with the loss of their child.

We still had some time left so we snuck a couple of additional readers in today (my, aren't we efficient). Marjorie read a beautiful poem about Lindy Chamberlain and her baby Azaria, very touching. Everyone wondered if Marjorie had ever thought of sending it to her. Then Hazel followed on from her reading from last meeting from her new novel 'See No Evil: History of a War Child'. This chapter told of the family coming out from hiding after bombs had been dropped and trying to pull themselves together to prepare for their Christmas party. Well done Hazel, as usual, very visual writing, everyone's waiting to hear what happens next.

Next Meeting's exercise: Write about a country road

Feature Reader for next meeting: Judith

**Until next time... happy writing everyone,
Naomi**

P.s. Don't stop here, Chips computer tips are right over the page....

Now for Chip's Computer Tips

Nine steps to a safer Internet experience

► **Be alert online.** As the StaySafeOnline Web site states, being a heads-up Internet user is your first line of defence. Don't click on suspicious links, don't open **.zip** files you weren't expecting, and stay away from any site that looks less than completely professional. (After all, you wouldn't walk in an unsafe neighbourhood.) Sites offering free software and free file sharing are risky.

► **Protect your funds.** Review your banking and credit card statements monthly. Consider asking your bank for credit card with a low credit limit, and use that card for all your online accounts and shopping. Remove automatic billings for online purchases wherever possible.

► **Patch your browser and operating system.** While the StaySafeOnline.org site urges you to keep your browser and operating system up-to-date, I'll go one step further and urge you to keep your applications up-to-date as well.

It's not enough to just patch Internet Explorer or Firefox and Windows XP or Win7. Make sure your PDF reader, media players (including Flash and QuickTime), word processor, and e-mail client are all current. Secunia's free Personal Software Inspector is an excellent tool for making sure all your apps are patched.

Keep in mind, however, there will be times when you should skip an update for your desktop PC, as I occasionally point out in my Patch Watch column. A recent example is the out-of-band patch for **.NET** I noted in a Windows Secrets Lounge post. Some patches are worse than the vulnerabilities they protect you from. But typically, keeping up-to-date on all patches is the best protection.

► **Have a backup.** Keeping your system fully backed up will make tasks such as installing updates less worrisome. And if you have a lapse in judgment while Web-surfing, you can roll back to a time prior to the oops. Windows Secrets and the StaySafeOnline site describe various effective backup techniques. From cloud-based backup solutions to external USB hard drives to home network-attached storage, there's no excuse for not having a backup.

► **Raise cyber-aware kids.** I grew up in an era when teachers had to worry only about students passing notes in class. Today, teachers have to deal with cell phones and text messaging. Parents face even greater challenges as their kids become exposed to threats from social networking, sexting, and online predators.

StaySafeOnline.org recommends setting up home computers in open areas (such as a family room or kitchen) so parents can easily watch what their kids are doing online. They should also sit down with their children and discuss the risks they face online. If you think there is a problem, consider installing software such as SpectorSoft's Spector Pro to monitor chat conversations, Web sites visited, and other online activity.

► **Check your security baseline.** Before going online, make sure all the components of your security system — browser, firewall, and anti-malware app — are working and up-to-date. Check out the Windows Secrets Security Baseline page for a minimal security setup. Running monthly scans with additional AV apps such as Malwarebytes helps remove other malicious critters that might have wiggled in.

► **Pick stronger passwords.** An October 2009 home-PC user survey completed by NCSA states that 37% of PC users do not change their passwords and 40% use the same password for all their online accounts. To keep your accounts safe, change your passwords regularly and use a different password for each account. If an account offers additional password-reset options (Windows Live, for example), sign in and add that information.

► **Know what to do.** As a page on the StaySafeOnline site urges, know what to do should something bad happen. You can, for example, contact Microsoft at **1-866-PCSafetyText** for help cleaning a system. If your e-mail account gets hacked, know the e-mail address or Web site where you can reset your information.

I disagree with StaySafeOnline on one point. Should you get hacked or infected by a virus, it suggests that you need only scan your system with an antivirus app. But, in many cases, the standard AV apps are not enough. As already mentioned, try additional AV scanners. To be sure all malware is removed, you may need to restore your system to a status prior to the infection. Some rootkits cannot be removed from your operating system without using an alternative boot disk. You may even have to completely reinstall your operating system.

► **Know whom to rely on.** I'll add one more cyber-security tip to StaySafeOnline's list. Know what resources you can depend upon for good information about protecting your computer. Few of us have any formal security training, yet we depend on our PCs for reliable shopping, work, and entertainment. Reputable online forums are an excellent resource for expert information. We hope you use the Windows Secrets Lounge as one of those key resources, but others include the official Microsoft Answers forum.

It's a dangerous world out on the Internet. Be aware and be safe.