

Award Season

by Larry Strattner

This year I made the list of top-twenty, “Not-quite-dead authors of the upper Midwest.” I attained this honor at a relatively young age for the not-quite-dead list, but had been drinking so heavily I was selected; if I recall, they said, *de facto*.

To gain a place on the not-quite-dead list one must be published twelve consecutive times in the Letters to the Editor section of a daily newspaper with a circulation of less than twenty thousand. If the paper has a restriction on the number of words in a letter, like say 300, it enhances your position on the list to get an editor to accept a really stupid letter exceeding the guidelines. For example, your 400 words are accepted during which you bitch about rising taxes and the erosion of your God-given rights even though everyone in town knows you haven't voted in the last twenty three elections.

It is often easier to submit an obviously wacko letter to a newspaper in distant towns. I would recommend these be among your first letters since after about the first six letters every subscriber surrounding that town will have you pegged as a dip-shit. Spreading your letters around avoids difficulties attaining the twelve letter requirement for consideration.

Being on the not-quite-dead list can enhance your writing career, like winning a film Oscar, where for example, Christian Bale used to get eight million per film and after Oscar may get ten, or if the project requires publicly berating a gofer, as much as twelve million.

I used to get two and a half cents a word from Udder Delight, the milking machine journal, but since getting on the not-quite-dead list I have sold several articles to Boiling Squirrel, the outdoor cooking journal, for almost five cents per word! Up here, where I am, that's almost a fifty percent increase. Some of these increases, fantastic as they may be, are mitigated by the twenty five dollar per article maximum Boiling Squirrel, Fish Flogger, Septic System Weekly and the other more widely circulated magazines have imposed.

Perhaps more importantly, making the not-quite-dead list gets you visibility. I have been contacted by several anthologists, collection editors and the selection committee for the, "Twenty best fiction writers under 40." I told that bunch, "under 40 for me is farther south than Iowa," but I looked it up. There's some kid on that list who's only 26. How the hell can you get on any list when you're twenty six? Except maybe the list of those currently twenty six. The kid didn't look old enough to buy a six pack. I've seen that magazine around too, The New Yorker. Mavis Menchel used to get it, I think, until the first time they printed "fuck" in it and she dropped that rag faster than you could say, "hot potato!" Under 40? Are you kidding me?

I may send out a few pieces out about starling nests as a source of chimney fires and such. Capitalize on my notoriety, if you know what I mean. I'm sure I won't get over six cents but I am working on a letter to the editor about lynching the governor that may move me up the not-quite-dead list. It's looking like five hundred words. If I get it placed who knows what opportunities might open up?

