

Substitute by Gary D. Moore – novel@gmasw.com

"If you are enrolled in Professor Sutton's English 101 class... for this period, please sit in your assigned seat!" Dale Evans yelled above the raucous din.

The room immediately quieted. Several students blankly stared at the smartly dressed gray haired man standing at the lowest portion of the bowl shaped room.

"Guests are welcome as are students from Professor Sutton's other classes!" Dale loudly said, "However, I ask that guests and other students sit in the middle section behind enrolled students!"

Several people quickly shuffled between rows of armchair seats. Within a minute, everyone was sitting. Many students softly talked in muted conversations.

A bell chimed.

"My name is Dale, but please address me as Mr. Evans while we are in class! The next two hours are yours and mine... to share! I appreciate your cooperation by not talking unless you raise your hand to ask a question or make a constructive comment,"

"Oh yeah... Professor Sutton is having her baby right about now," Dale cheerily said.

Excited conversation ripped through the room.

"My cousin, Pamela, asked me to fill-in for an interim time... or until another more suitable English 101 teacher is found," he added in a loud voice as the room quieted.

"Many of you do not want to be here... just like me!" Dale added with a sly grin.

"I recall a great reluctance taking a similar English class in the Fall of 1969 while attending college in Sacramento California. That experience was not a good one! My first college English teacher painstakingly tortured us with analysis of poetry for the entire semester. The teacher did not review or discuss any practical rudiments of the English language," Dale continued.

He glanced around the room at the young students many of whom had expressions of bewilderment.

"One condition of being Pam's substitute is to honestly convey my opinion about intro English classes that are required by every accredited college and university in the U.S.A.!"

"I want you to clearly understand that I loathed English 1A and 1B... as the requisite intro classes are titled in California!" Dale said in a distinct forthright manner.

The room remained quiet. Several students shot furtive glances at their classmates.

A shorthaired big burly student had a big grin as he deliberately gazed at a studious young man sitting beside him. The much smaller student grimaced and squirmed in his seat.

"However!" Dale loudly proclaimed, "College English is an absolute essential building block for those of you who will pursue a college degree and want to succeed in life!"

Soft conversation erupted around the room. Dale patiently waited for several seconds.

"You will be tested on what I present, but hopefully, most of what is shared... is easy to learn and useful throughout your academic and personal lives! This review will enhance your ability to recognize what is conveyed in writing, but is also applicable for oral communication. The ultimate goal is to enhance your personal scholarship about the English language and its proper usage!" he enunciated.

There were a few subtle moans.

"My list of English language essentials is entirely mine. However, over the next several weeks... my intent is to make those English fundamentals... ours!" Dale emphasized.

He glanced at the seating chart in his hand.

"Miss Jacobs, do you know a course description for English 101?" Dale asked in warm and friendly manner to a neatly attired young woman sitting in the second row.

"Mr. Evans, I am Sandra Sims. This class is on my requirements list. I did not read anything about it. I just signed up for it," she honestly replied in a distinct Southern accent.

Dale looked at the seating chart, and then glanced around room. "Obviously, many of you are not sitting in assigned seats since the two young men sitting in front of Miss Sims are listed as Janet Walker and Margery Barnes," he commented with a comical wry expression.

There were muted chuckles as Janet Walker and Margery Barnes meekly raised their hands.

"Okay, we will do it this way... when I call on someone or you ask a question, please state your name first!" Dale added as he placed the seating chart on a table behind the podium.

"Mrs. Kern, how do you take roll?" Dale suddenly asked as he abruptly turned toward an older student sitting beside a small table at the edge of the lowest dais.

"Mr. Evans, everyone sees me prior to class. If they do not, they are considered absent. Students are only allowed to miss two sessions without excuse," the graduate student promptly replied.

Dale paused for a mere second and then returned his stance facing the students.

"Sir!" the studious young man sitting beside the burly student squeaked out, "I am a Senior and am not enrolled this class. I tutor several Freshmen English students... mostly athletes."

Dale smiled and said, "You did not say your name, but if you remain here... you will complete all assigned homework and take tests."

The young man looked stunned.

There was subtle applause and conversation.

"Everyone who attends this class will pickup a blue book and assignment sheet from Mrs. Kern by the end of class. And, everyone will write on an assigned topic for each day of class!" Dale distinctly bellowed as he motioned toward the graduate assistant.

There were audible moans and groans. Sandra Sims chuckled at the conversation between the two young men sitting in front of her. She rolled her eyes and smiled at Mr. Evans.

"Listen up! This is one-third of your grade... in lieu of a term paper!" Dale Evans loudly stated.

There was vigorous applause amid conversation.

When the noise diminished, Dale continued, "Mrs. Sutton and I want you to have a fulfilling and educational experience while you review English fundamentals taught you from your earliest school days. Recognizing and knowing proper English usage is beneficial for your college career as well as for life after you graduate! And... it is my desire that all of you graduate with at least a bachelor degree!"

"Allow me to answer the question posed to Miss Sims. English 101 augments what you learned in high school English classes in preparation for your academic career," Dale distinctly said.

He paused as he scanned the room. It remained quiet.

"English is a spoken and written language, but it also refers to fundamentals of both writing and speech. Elements of English are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, adjectives, gerunds, and many others. These... collectively... are known as parts of speech,"

"Often times, the fundamental components have a complex definition. We, as a class, will collaborate to more simply define these parts of speech... compiling definitions with relevant examples. This collective effort will eventually become a reference for everyone. Others who take this course will also use and contribute to this compendium. Thus, you are all about to become authors!" Dale said until conversation drown him out. He patiently waited for quiet.

"I am not a grammarian! However, some grammatical errors are personally irritating! One pet peeve is the erroneous use of farther and further. Succinctly, farther denotes distance while further means more or in addition. These two adverbs are misused and abused by even highly educated people and many songwriters. Just listen to educational channel commentators or some popular country western songs to note the frequency of this error," he added with a wry expression.

"Your first writing assignment is about the proper use of farther and further. Miss Sims sits farther away than Mrs. Kern does. The further he read, the better he understood the professor's assignment. These are two simple examples of proper usage," Dale said and then paused.

"Miles Baker," a young man sitting at the edge of the class spoke up, "What does succinctly mean?"

Dale Evans smiled.

"When I first attended college, I compiled a dictionary of words that I did not know while reading various assignments. This compilation helped me learn words that differ from the 250 used in normal conversation. I still reference and add to that dictionary," he said as he held up a three ring binder.

"Rather archaic for this modern age, but it still serves a valuable personal purpose," he loudly added over soft conversation.

"Mrs. Kern!" Dale directly addressed the graduate assistant, "Compile a list of words you believe are unfamiliar... compare your list with ones the students present. However, do not define the words! Only list them. Students can create a dictionary of their own beginning with succinctly."

Then, Dale provided a short definition of the word. There was soft conversation.

"Another interesting non-word that several of you included in your first essay is...all right," Dale stressed and then paused as he scanned a silent room. "The incorrect spelling is A-L-R-I-G-H-T!" he added as he also wrote it on the white board. "The correct form is A-L-L space R-I-G-H-T," Dale distinctly said to the stunned audience as he wrote on the white board with a red marker.

"All right is somehow associated with already, but I do not understand why?" Dale commented.

"The improper word...alright...I believe...came into usage with various fifties and sixties pop songs. Like many other examples of jargon, this anomalous contraction of ALL RIGHT is incorrect English. Please do not use it! You will receive a lower grade if you do use it in any written assignment," Mr. Evans markedly enunciated, and then paused.

"Moving on...after a hiatus from attending college, I developed a useful and beneficial study habit when I returned to college fulltime. That is, to type handwritten notes immediately upon arriving at my off campus apartment... using a manual typewriter and an ample supply of whiteout,"

"My notes are still legible and comprehensible after over thirty years. The interesting aspect about this endeavor is that I often elaborated and added to notes gleaned from my handwritten scrawl. Lectures were still fresh in my mind while typing. This effort aided me scholastically. In fact, many classmates would copy my notes or get them from me if they missed a class," Dale distinctly said.

The room remained quiet.

"One more brief caveat... this is exceptional wisdom imparted by an excellent professor at the same time I endured English 1A," Dale emphasized, "Professor Parks said that people who use profanity and derogatory euphemisms do so because they do not have a command of the English language. Professor Parks correctly inferred that guttural speech is indicative of ignorance and stupidity!"

"So, if you do not want the label of ignoramus or dim-wit associated with your good name, refrain from using vulgar and crass superlatives when speaking...and never in writing! However, and most importantly, denigrating and demeaning remarks about anyone... is wrong! Especially avoid them when you write... to prevent lawsuits!" Dale ardently stated.

There was noisy conversation.

"I immediately adopted his suggestion and follow it to this day!" he compellingly added.

The room erupted in noisy discussion. Dale allowed conversations to continue for a minute.

At the end of the first hour, Dale gave a brief recess. Most students rushed the graduate assistant to get a blue book and assignment sheet. Some students also shared their word list.

"Listen up! We have about fifty minutes remaining!" Dale loudly said at the end of the break.

"Willie Tone, sir!" the burly young man said as he raised his hand.

"Mr. Tone, do you have a question?" Dale asked.

"Yes, sir!" the young man politely replied in a pronounced Cajun drawl. "If you hated English so much, why do you care if we get anything out of this class?" he honestly asked.

Dale smiled. "My loathing... like most dislikes... was based on ignorance. I did not have an English teacher that motivated me to realize the importance of proper English usage. I also lacked the maturity to appreciate my classes...regardless of an instructor's ability to teach...at age nineteen,"

"However, let me also emphasize that my first English professor taught part time. In retrospect, I do not believe he grasped the magnitude of his influence since he had only been out of college for a year. His teaching method and ability was severely limited,"

"I further emphasize and freely admit that I did not have a personal commitment to do well! My apathetic attitude carried over from my high school days where my GPA was an abysmal 2.21! However, I only have four C's in my college career... all of them in Freshman courses. Two in English, one in Political Science, and one in an intro Science class where the professor did not like me because I was in the military. All my other college classes are A's interspersed with a spattering of B's,"

"My attitude did not change until after completing Freshman courses with a GPA of 2.55. I knew I could and should do better. College is supposed to be a positive and rewarding experience. What you put in, you get out! My GPA at graduation with a B.S. degree is 3.38. Not great, but satisfactory. Raising sixteen semester credits of C's is difficult!" Dale candidly replied.

There was loud conversation. He patiently waited.

"Is that an adequate answer, Mr. Tone?" Dale asked as the noise diminished.

"Yes, sir! But, why did the Science Professor dislike you?" Willie asked in reply.

Dale rolled his eyes and grimaced.

"The Vietnam Era is a complex social and political time. Unreal idealistic and bigoted attitudes dominated college campuses. Those who served in the U.S. military were often shunned and despised because of the very unpopular war in Southeast Asia. However, Mr. Tone, your question requires a more extensive and detailed answer than time allows, so let me just say that I survived and am wiser for it!" Dale honestly replied.

"One more question, Mr. Evans," Willie said, "How many books have you written?"

There was quiet whispering, and then it was very quiet.

"Someone knows about my other life!" Dale lightheartedly replied with a grin as he turned toward the graduate assistant.

Mrs. Kern shook her head.

A young woman with a long blonde stuffed under a baseball cap timidly raised her hand.

Dale Evans smiled.

"Cousin Sally, I thought you were in another English class," Dale said still smiling, "Sorry for not noticing you. It is good to see you!"

"Sally Wilhelm, I switched classes when my sister mentioned that you will sub while she has her baby," Sally meekly defended.

"Mr. Evans, I only mentioned your prolific writing when someone questioned your competence and capability to teach English when you have a B.S. in Business," she added.

The studious young man squirmed in his seat.

"Mr. Tone, I have one novel published. Its sequel is ready for the press, and a fantasy trilogy should be available next year. That is five books and more waiting. I have also authored numerous computer, technical, and veteran related articles along with some noteworthy essays published over the past thirty years," Dale replied to Willie.

"An English degree is not necessary to write! You only need desire, inspiration, and commitment! Many English majors... that I know... are not great writers. They tend to get lost in the complexities of the language... and forget the primary fundamental... communication and entertainment!"

"This is why you are required to write in your journal each class day. The only way you learn to write is by writing!"

"I had no idea that I would author articles, essays, and books when I sat where you are sitting...way back in 1969,"

"A good friend who is an English teacher likes my books. Other readers have also read them... including my cousins, Pam and Sally. Although my books may not become classics, they are entertaining and somewhat enlightening," Dale sincerely said as he slightly bowed to Sally.

"Mr. Smith!" Dale Evans addressed the studious young man, "Coach Wilhelm, Pamela and Sally's father, informs me that you are not required to attend class with the athletes that you tutor."

The lithe young man nervously squirmed in his seat.

"Daryl Smith," he fretfully replied, "If you do not mind, sir, I would like to attend this class. I will do the homework and take the tests that you and Mrs. Sutton require of the English 101 students."

"Sir, I apologize for my condescending and arrogant attitude!" he humbly added as he stood up.

"An apology is not necessary, but you are welcome to stay," Dale said, "Please sit down!"

"Pamela made an outline of what she expects during her absence. We will review it first thing... next session. For the remaining forty minutes, I will enunciate some fundamental attributes of good writing and speaking," he positively stated.

The room remained quiet.

"Most college reading and writing is factual or technical. Thus, crafting characterization with enhanced descriptive content within a story line is not stressed. Most of your written assignments are based on factual information. It is easier to write technically than to author a novel!" Dale stressed.

"However, you must be able to determine what is being communicated within the structure of any text or lecture! Thus, intimate knowledge of English fundamentals is crucial!"

"You may want to write down some of these tips! Most will help you identify proper and correct English usage. Everything I say is familiar or easy to learn," Dale clearly said and then paused.

"Matching verb tenses is essential for good communication. This grammar rule is often violated with rewrites. Pay close attention to verb tenses when rewriting! I often err on this," he admitted.

There were chuckles.

"While I am thinking about it... an excellent writing tip given by a business communications professor, Dr. Roseann Swartz, is to read your written work aloud. If your composition is not fluid, rewrite or reorganize offending sentences. Write like you speak! You will find writing easier when you say it aloud," Dale said. He paused while he scanned the room.

"Write what you know! College courses typically present new material. Study text assignments until you know the material, and then write logically according to the dictates of your professor,"

"Good study habits include exceptional research techniques. We will outline effective study and research practices next week... applicable for term papers and most of your written assignments," Dale emphasized.

There was soft conversation, and then it grew quiet.

"Students are often required to write term or research papers for intro college English courses, but with the internet... students can easily copy from on-line resources. Thus, writing by hand in a blue book hones writing skills in an honest way," Dale frankly said.

Muted comments and chuckles echoed from the students.

"Avoid contractions! Contractions do not translate well!" Dale said. "Can't, don't, won't, isn't, they're, you're... confuse readers rather than convey accurate communication. This does not mean a total abstinence... especially in dialogue... just use contractions sparingly!" he added.

"Akin to contraction avoidance is the use of slang. Contemporary words and phrases get lost in translation between generations,"

"Bombed, killer, camp... are words used by the youth of my era. Likewise, your generation has speech idioms and words unique to it. Thus, avoid using colloquial jargon when you write... now and in the future to avoid uncertainty, especially, in technical writing," Dale said as he scanned the classroom. It remained quiet as students feverishly wrote. He paused for a few more seconds.

"Past tense is unavoidable! However, avoid it when possible," Dale succinctly stated and paused.

"If you are puzzled by any word usage, rephrase using a synonym!"

"Do not use words out of your own or the reader's vocabulary range! However, use words that are pertinent and relevant to the topic even if they are more complex than normal conversation," he said.

"Write what your professors like! Pleasing them will garner a better grade!" Dale stressed with a sly grin after a pause.

"Let me relate a factual experience. In California, college professors demanded a direct and concise style of writing as did the U.S. military. However, while taking a Sociology class in Michigan I was confronted with a dramatic change in writing technique... after getting a 'D' on my mid-term. A classmate and I compared answers. I correctly answered each and every question. However, that particular professor wanted... in my terminology... diarrhea of the pen. My final was an 'A' and I ended up with a B in the class... after delivering what that teacher expected. The professor simply wanted all answers to fill the white space in a provided response section,"

"This lesson is applicable for all your college classes! Seek out students who took the course and inquire about what the professor wants. Then, proceed accordingly! However, with new teachers, you will just have to wing it!" he stressed.

There were soft whispers, and then quiet.

"Personal pronouns... such as who and whom... are acceptable in speech and writing. However, remember that whom is always used after a preposition or as an object. To whom were you speaking? Is a terse question, but a germane example,"

"I and me are sometimes confusing. Me is always an object while I is always a subject. Mrs. Kern and I are available after class. You may discuss your writing assignments with Mrs. Kern or me. Are simple examples," Dale offered and then paused.

"A precarious no-no is the dangling preposition. Who were you talking to? Is an often posed question. The orphaned boy had no one to rely on. Is another example,"

"However, some teachers get upset because of the incomplete prepositional phrase. Thus, avoid them!" Dale distinctly said. He paused to drink from a water bottle as students hurriedly wrote.

"Your Norton's Anthology reading assignments vary. Glean aspects of good writing from assigned selections. My recommendation is to read your daily assignment a minimum of three times. Taking notes about content after reading the second time!" Dale distinctly said.

There were muted moans and groans.

"Let me assure you... I understand your reluctance," he added with a smile, "Just do it!"

"We will discuss the use of metaphors and similes in today's reading next session! This particular assignment is replete with them. However, using metaphors and similes in technical writing is dubious. Again, determine what your instructor wants and write accordingly!" Dale emphasized.

Near the end of the period, he said, "Included on the backside of your syllabus is an extensive list of reference books that I keep beside my desk along with other notable references that are in my library. The list is presented in order of importance. So, marginal spellers... like me... should immediately purchase the spelling dictionary! A good collegiate dictionary and a thesaurus are also highly recommended! These will assist you throughout your college years and later in life!"

"The Gregg Reference Manual is listed last, but it is exceptional! However, that particular book has a complex layout. Review one in the library before you purchase it to determine its value right now. But, buy one before you graduate!" Dale loudly said as the bell chimed.

Six weeks later.

"The English fundamentals project to which everyone contributed is ten pages of very useful information!" Pamela Sutton cheerfully said after the bell chimed.

There was vigorous applause.

"It is my understanding that everyone enjoyed my cousin's English perspective, or should I say... Dale's perspective about English language usage," she added with a smile.

There was louder applause.

"Sandra Sims," Sandra said as she raised her arm. "Will Mr. Evans return?" she timidly asked.

"Yes!" Pamela replied, "Dale has interviews and some personal business that he put off while subbing for me. After he finishes those tasks, he and I will team teach at least once a week."

There was applause and soft conversation.

"Dale gave you a broad and thorough overview of English fundamentals that he believes are essential for good written and oral communication. Although his teaching technique is unconventional for an introductory college English course, what he shared is amazingly effective! Your analysis of reading assignments has dramatically improved because of what you learned. Dale's review of English basics made you better students! Eighty-two is the lowest score on the last test!" Pamela said as she held up a clutch of papers.

"And, your blue book writing assignments show dramatic improvement in only six weeks!" she loudly added amid applause.

William Tone smiled after Pamela handed him his test with a circled B+.

Excited conversation rippled through the room as the students reviewed their graded test.

The week before finals everyone quietly scurried to their seats before the bell chimed.

"Your final is comprised of a written section and fifty multiple choice questions," Professor Sutton loudly said, "Everything presented by Mr. Evans and me is fair game!"

There was subtle conversation.

"Do not panic!" Dale Evans positively said as he stood beside Professor Sutton, "You know the material! You all have mastered everything presented... as shown by your written assignments. All you must do... is think clearly and expound on what is presented... on this test."

The room remained quiet.

"Sandra Sims," Sandra said when Professor Sutton recognized her, "Are you teaching English 102 next semester?"

"Yes! " Pamela replied, "Because Mr. Wall is retiring, Dale and I agreed to team teach two sessions of English 102 along with a session of English 210."

There was vigorous applause.

"How many of you signed up for Mr. Wall's English 102 class?" Dale asked.

The vast majority of students raised their hands.

"You will write a term paper in that class without the aid of the internet!" Dale clearly stated.

The room remained quiet.

"Every Wednesday from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. a research workshop is scheduled in this room for the first half of the semester...computers are allowed. Several advanced English students along with Mr. Evans and me are available to help you organize your term papers. After Spring break, a proof-writing session is scheduled two nights a week for two weeks. Then, your papers are due by week twelve of the semester! That is a hint of what you can expect in English 102!" Professor Sutton clearly said.

The room was quiet.

"Willie Tone," Willie said, "Mr. Evans, the term paper book you recommended is not available in the bookstore."

"Correct, Mr. Tone!" Dale replied, "However, the bookstore manager assures me that it will arrive next week."

"You will have access to the English 102 syllabus on-line...next week... to give you a jump start for reading assignments. Bluebook writing is less intense, but still required," he added.

There was applause and soft conversation.