

From Dramaturg to Playwright in Thirty Short Years



By: Anne Hamilton, M.F.A.

Since the BCWJ published my last column, my play **AND THEN I WENT INSIDE** has won a performance in a new play festival in New York City, and I am poised to make the leap from dramaturg to playwright. What an honor.

Here is how this came about.

In June, the League of Professional Theatre Women solicited new scripts with

the theme "Turning Points" from its members for its New Play Festival competition. I submitted my ten-minute play and won a place in the festival along with nine other women. The show will be held on November 9th at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

I had known that I wanted to write a play but didn't have one planned. This one flowed out of me in one piece on June 13th, two days after I gave an internet radio interview on the topic of Healing Through the Arts. I had talked with the show's hosts, Drs. Gloria and Heidi Horsley, about the loss of my friend Curtis in a car accident thirty years ago, and about my healing journey since then.

I was able to process some deeper feelings as a result of this interview, and in the middle of the day on June 13th I realized something: I had been in love with Curtis since I was sixteen. I grabbed

a pen and paper, sat down, and wrote the line: "I just realized that I've been in love with a dead man for thirty years." I put the line into the mouth of a character named Stacy Lee Madison, who is also an artist and a scholar. And the rest of the play flowed from there.

I've written in this column previously about my work on **ANOTHER WHITE SHIRT**, which is also about how grief moves through the body. **AND THEN I WENT INSIDE** is a further expression of my healing process. I find that as I try to help give others tools to process their grief, I experience healing, as well.

As a dramaturg, I usually assist playwrights with casting decisions and in their collaboration with directors. Suddenly, my words and my decisions are at the center of the production. I interviewed a few well-qualified directors, and chose the marvelous Lorca Peress. The League has

secured a leading American actress to play the role of Stacy. Please visit www.theatrewomen.org for more information.

Anne Hamilton of Hamilton Dramaturgy, has eighteen years of experience in the professional theatre in New York City, across the nation, and internationally. STAGE

DIRECTIONS magazine named her a trailblazer in her field. She is an award-winning Columbia University graduate and will serve as Dramaturg for the New Voices student play festival at Muhlenberg College in October.

Please visit Anne's website at www.hamiltonlit.com. Email: hamiltonlit@gmail.com, Phone: 215-536-1074.

Anne M. Hamilton Hamilton Dramaturgy

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www.hamiltonlit.com
hamiltonlit@hotmail.com
(215) 536-1074

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Northeast Philly Native Connects With Humor



By Linda Wisniewski

Ever since grade school, Mary Fran Bontempo has loved to write. A self-described "awkward kid," the local author and columnist says she found that "writing was a great way to express myself without having to stumble socially...When I wrote, I could connect with people..."

And connect she does! With a twice weekly column in *The Bulletin*, a Philadelphia newspaper, a freelance writing business, three blogs and a

book, Bontempo delights in "playing with words."

"Most women," she says, "at times feel very isolated in their day to day existence, despite the fact that our experiences as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, etc., are very similar. My intention in writing about the humor found in everyday life has always been to show women that we share very common ground, and despite the differences in the details, we are not alone out there."

A Northeast Philly native, Bontempo moved to Bucks County with her husband and kids in 1984. She graduated from LaSalle College with a degree in secondary education, with concentrations in English and communications. She has worked in public relations, as a substitute teacher and a youth minister, and even as a singer at wedding ceremonies.

She decided to compile her *Bulletin* columns into a book so readers could flip to any page for a three to four minute read, and "experience a moment of sisterhood and then get on about their day."

Bontempo writes for women of different ages while at the same time approaching life "from the perspective of a woman of my age and experience." Her readers often tell her they are amazed she doesn't have hidden cameras in their houses!

For other women who want to write, Bontempo says "There's no way to get better at your craft, and writing is a craft, unless you practice it." And though it may sound cliché, write what you know. "Everyone has a mountain of readable work inside; you just have to unearth it. Don't be afraid to dig deep and write about what interests you and don't think that common experiences have no merit; they are often the ones that touch readers the most."

Bontempo is currently editing two new books – one for parents and one for young readers. She writes for the Philly Moms Blog (www.phillymomsblog.com), EspressoLatteMocha (<http://onpublishing.wordpress.com/>)

and her own site at www.maryfranbontempo.com. She also conducts seminars on getting publishing with two author friends Chrysa Smith and Carmen Ferriero Esteban.

Her book, "Everyday Adventures, Or, As My Husband Says, Lies, Lies and More Lies" can be ordered from Amazon.com.

Linda C. Wisniewski is a writer and teacher of memoir workshops. She is available to speak to groups about the healing power of writing. Her book, *Off Kilter*, can be ordered through Amazon, your local bookstore, or the publisher at www.pearlsong.com/offkilter.htm. Visit Linda's website at www.lindawis.com or call her at 215-297-5104.



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