

## **VETERAN**

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Emerson (don't ask) my 9-year old French Bulldog took an Award of Merit in the Louisville Cluster of dog shows recently. He was in the Veteran's Class. He retired after about 5 years in the show ring and after ranking No. 3 in the country for three straight years (including an award at Westminster one year). But this most recent event shows that the old boy still has it, and as a "veteran" he can recall what he has to do and how to do it!

Ah, the mark of a veteran!

No, Emerson is really an old veteran! Oh, sure, we have some wonderful men and women from WWII who served so well and did so much for us. I like to call them, "Highly developed veterans"

I think we all are veterans beginning from the moment we can begin to retain and recall information from a previous experience. Yes, a toddler can be a veteran, because each bit of information stored, even without forethought, in the sub-conscious, allows us to recall it and use it when again appropriate. Even Emerson, who by the way is no dummy, but does have the smaller animal brain, can do this. He can't talk, but he gets a look in his eye, that says plainly, "Hey, Judge, bring that blue ribbon right over here"! The boy "knows" his colors!!!

Now none of this is to denigrate our valiant veterans of war—they are our blessings, our defenders of our heritage and our freedom!

But "veteran" can be used in other ways to indicate experience. It is our total experience from cradle to grave that enhances our veteran status. It is the veteran in every specifications writer that sets that person apart as the holder of insight, the well-spring of information, and the source of invaluable direction and information. From the construction "war-stories" to the slightest nuance, the spec writer is a resource to be carefully chosen and incorporated as a valued part of every project sequence.

The spec writer's veteran status may appear as one word, or phrase; as one caution; as one link; as one re-routing to a new thought, idea, or source of information. This is a catalytic process where the spec writer can engender an aspect into a project that allows for betterment of the design, or easier execution of the work. At the same, the veteran experience comes to avoid many pitfalls, so commonly encountered too often by others.

The indication of veteran to the spec writer is the culmination of many experiences-- academic, administrative, legal, field experience, and simply being "bloody" a few times too often.

How do we pass this on to the new breed that is out there even if they have not appeared clearly yet? Offices and staffs come and go, but there is still need for specific positions and qualified people to fill them. What action is needed to perpetuate that sequence?

We need to be open to many others merely to become more well known, and commonly recognized as to function, and respected as to value received. It is rarely clear that a spec writer is born "that" way or is destined to be such from the word go. No second grader ever chose "spec writer" over fireman or nurse. But somehow, somewhere there are fairly isolated sightings of spec writers-- we have not yet been declared an endangered species; but you know that may be closer than we think, if we and our successors aren't careful!

Do you realize that in just the last few days you may have seen the spec writer who may apply for your job? Was it perhaps the bouncy little brunette cheerleader at the basketball game? No, not because she is a female and females are beginning to establish themselves in equal numbers. And most certainly not because she has a great head of hair suitable to replace one of us who tends toward the shiny pate!

But rather she could easily join our ranks because she developed an interest, a direction, a commitment, and a drive to do this work, to learn the nuances and to make a run at being a veteran! And we need understand that there are a decent number of others like her, who are increasing their veteran status in a manner that will lead them to specifications writing.

But until we open ourselves and reveal what we do, and who we are, we will see a bleak future and increased concern about the future of our profession. We dearly need to change our ways, increase our image and profile and become meaningful to others. We need to light their way, and to let the light of our veteranism show through.

Oh, and don't worry about Emerson—he's back in retirement and has no ambition beyond that bone across the room, should he gather the gumption to go get it!