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給孫兒女每月一信 [MONTHLY LETTER TO GRANDCHILDREN , JULY 22 , 2002]

這月中旬庭堅和庭永兩家來洛杉磯看我們，幫了很多忙。包括電腦、網頁及其他。

在我們給兒女信中有詳細說明。你們如想知道其詳，最好能練習自行閱讀，或向你們父母詢問。後面將我這月已增加到我網頁的一篇短文，加上英文翻譯，在這月的信中傳送給你們。

『英文短篇散文 處女作十二篇序言 6/30/2002[7] 文席謀

於洛杉磯這英文散文創作集是今(2002)年3月13日起、參加洛杉磯阿罕布拉市老年人中心筆會時，練習英文寫作的成果。每星期一篇，到五月底共完成11篇。以後特別增加一篇為12篇。六、七、八月暑期休息例不開會。九月再開始。預計以後我儘可能仍將參加開會，使文章篇數將不斷加多。三年之內可能超過百篇。

這會的正式名稱為“作家圓桌會”(WRITER'S ROUNDTABLE)。由本市一資深年長女作家金裴(JANE PIEWE)女士義務主持。共有會員十餘人。多為附近對寫作興

趣的耆年人士。女士佔多數。每星期三上午九時半到中心一特定會議室集合開會。

至十一時許、寫作討論和事務交待終結，可以自由離席、也可留在會中聊天到十二時。

到會者先簽到。隨後由主持人就印發有關寫作技巧的文章或資料說明解釋。約十餘分鐘後，到會者每人提出一篇上次會中規定要寫的文章，按簽到先後次序、輪流由各人自己宣讀。每讀完一篇大家批評討論，或提出問題。隨後議定下週要交作品的題目。題目的選定是從一包括多數題材的長單中挑選。可由與會者輪流建議，或由主持人指定。據說這樣‘題目單’可在多種網絡上找到而‘拷貝’或‘下載’。若與中國傳統作文命題相比、將發現這筆會中的題目字數可長可短、範圍靈活而廣泛、多具有廣闊想像及發揮空間。寫作者能就個人經歷、專業、想像等多方面素材融合而寫成散文或詩歌。無刻板拘泥之弊。多能使作者、讀者、聽者、甚至閱稿或改稿人易感興趣。會中重寫作技巧和內容的討論。不涉及宗教及政治性敏感問題爭論。

我曾參加洛杉磯華人寫作協會。那與這會性質頗多不同。這會人數較少、不限人種、不收會費、每週集會、討論寫作實務、每週交作品相互觀摩討論、開會時不吃飯、場所在當地老年人中心、環境幽雅清靜，等等。華人的寫作會人數較多、多在餐廳開會、人聲嘈雜、或請名人演講、開會次數較少。兩者文化背景不同，客觀環境和條件也不一樣。

關於寫作技巧、我因金裴女士核稿的提示、發現時下美國行文對文法不如我想像中拘泥，以簡明達意、近乎口語、自然而具邏輯性為主。我從前在國內學英文時非常重視‘文法’。現發現其和前所學的不盡相同。我以往寫過英文技術性文章。和現在所寫散文風格有異。我的文稿是用電腦打字，經微軟WORD2000文法和拼寫校正，然後打印提出。為便於寫作和審稿，我所寫的幾全為短文。

因參與這筆會，偶然在電腦網絡用“writer”這字來“搜尋”瀏覽。發現其有關

內容非常廣博，討論寫作技巧和介紹學習機會非常多。美國平常所見出版的書籍報刊種類繁多，幾乎每一種事物都有其專書和雜誌。深感美國人不但愛玩愛運動，也很愛讀書。文風之盛、不愧為世界超

強。我僅是在退休以寫作為消閑而不是專業。這次偶然涉獵，才瞭解美國社會對‘寫作’如此重視而務實。不覺感到‘學海無涯’而‘望洋興嘆！’

附：十二篇英文短篇散文處女作文稿中譯目錄名稱：01 電梯驚魂記。02 駕車違規

遇警記。03 悔不當初。04 寵物(狗)的設身處地。05 談迷信。06 略述生平及喜愛的住處。07 “雪”的感受。08 “島”字引發的思維。09 神仙故事中‘壞蛋’自白。10 設想和某名人餐敘時所作詢問。11 寫給上帝的一封信，談你對宗教的看法。12 不用冷氣機的祛暑方法。

[MONTHLY LETTER TO GRANDCHILDREN, JULY 22, 2002]

This month Doug and Lily came to see us from 10th to 13th. John, Debbie, Joseph and Melanie came on 12th and left on 17th. They helped us a lot during staying with us, including customized the new PC setting and cured the virus problem of my old PC. Since I have mentioned what they had done for us in detail in my July monthly letter to our children, you might be possible

to read that letter or ask your parents to tell you something in it. Writing

you this month, I would like to copy a short Chinese essay I just wrote onto my homepage but with additional English translation, regarding the Alhambra Writer's Roundtable and what I had done since became a member of it. The essay's name is, "Forewords on My 12 Short English Prose Writing Debut". The text is as follows:

"These 12 short English prose are my creative writing after I joined the ALHAMBRA WRITER'S ROUNDTABLE, which is located at and supported by the Alhambra

city's Jocelyn Senior Citizen Center, from March 13, 2002 to the end of May, resulted in 11 articles of the assignment with an additional out of special arrangement. This ROUNDTABLE pauses in June, July and August for summer vacation and is supposed to resume in September. I would be trying to continue my participation if possible in September, to keep my writings'

increasing in number, hopefully reaches one hundred in three years to come.

The ROUNDTABLE is headed and dedicatedly managed by a local famous senior writer Ms. Jane Piewe on voluntary basis. It has nearly twenty senior citizens members; ladies in majority, most reside in the Alhambra city having common interest in writing. Normally the teacher and the fellow members gather at 9:30 AM in the Wednesday of a week, discussing writing and assignment for home work for about one and half hours, then members are free to leave

or to stay chatting up to noon.

Members who arrive at the meeting have to sign-in first. Then the chairperson

(also teacher) Ms. Piewe calls attention and begin the interpretation of

the redistributed handouts regarding writing skills and other relevant information, mixed with possible discussions lasting about 30 minutes all together. Then the attendants begin to present their writings performed at home on the assigned subject in the last week meeting, and then read one by one the "papers" presented. Shortly after each finished reading, there might be a few minute pauses for the listeners to possibly raise questions and/or comments. When all the presentation is all over, there will be the time for the group or the teacher to pick up an assigned topic for the next time home writing, from a long list of subjects, which is said could be downloaded from some writer's magazine. The content of these subjects are mostly of broad and versatile coverage and stimulus for thinking and imagination. Writers assigned with such listed subjects

are apt to compose writings based on their own background, experiences, profession and imagination interesting to writers themselves and possible readers or listeners. The

discussions in the meeting are generally confined to writing matters, avoid touching to political and religious contention.

I have had a chance to be a member of the Chinese Writer's Association in Los Angeles for many years. Now I find some radical differences between the Chinese Writer's society and the American. Usually Chinese Writer's Association hold meetings in noisy restaurants with banquet and famous people

speaking, leaving little time for participants to discuss and practice writing skills. The consequential differences are evident.

From the distributed materials and the verbal instructions of the teacher Jane Piewe, I have the impression that the American contemporary writings do not stick in the stereotype grammar rules. Being logical, simple, verbal, accustomed, easily understood, vividly presented are most important. In the past I had experience in writing some technical documents, now I find

the present writing of short prose are quite different in style. In drafting

these prose, I made use of the computer to solve a part of the grammar and spelling problems. For easier reading and reviewing I have tried to keep my writing as short as possible.

I once tried to use the word "writer" in my PC web site "search engine" to find out something to my interest and got tremendous amount relevant information shown, regarding writing skill and learning opportunities. In USA you can see in tremendous amount of news papers, magazines, and books covering all conceivable topics. They are so amazing. American people not

only like sports, games and many kind of weird things, but also profoundly like reading and writing.

Briefly translated topics of the 12 short writings: (01) Elevator Entrapment,

(02) Kindhearted Cops, (03) Remorse, (04) Fate of Dogs, (05) On Superstitions, (06) Most Liked Dwelling Place in my Life. (07) Snow and its Associations (08) Writing Setting from ISLAND, (09) Confection of a Villain in a Fairy Story, (10). An Imaginary Question to Ask to a Famous Person, (11) Assumed Letter to the God to Express Your Religion Viewpoint.

(12) Methods to Keep Cool in summer without Air-conditioner.