

Let Me Help You

Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write
Articles*

Lesson 7

**CUMULATIVE
REPETITIVE STATEMENT
CATALOG
SURPRISE ENDING**

By Professor Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

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24 Ways to
Sell Your Homework:
Articles

LESSON 1	Master Your Library
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CUMULATIVE

Whether it is Christ gathering disciples beside the Sea of Galilee or Sir Edmund Hillary gathering climbers for Mt. Everest, the article built on the cumulative plan has great appeal.

The method is to begin with the hero and to add his comrades one by one. An article about explorers setting off to find the South Pole would, at least at the outset, be cumulative while the team is being selected.

In the case of Little Half Chick, the story started with the drop of an acorn. It hit old H.C. on the head and she thought the sky was falling. She ran off in all directions, telling each sympathetic friend the whole story all over again. By the time we reach the climax, we have a mob scene.

The same thing happened to the Bremerton musicians. The first one became discontented with his lot and set off for the big city. Each animal he met shared his discontent and decided to throw in his lot with the first. As they got near their destination, they found a house they would like to live in. They serenaded its occupants—a gang of robbers—and inadvertently won possession of the house.

Cumulative means simply that we

accumulate. One person meets another and disciples him. The two meet a third and so on. The occasion may be thoroughly ordinary or it may be a gathering of the nuts. With cumulative, you must study incentives. What gets the group to gather? Little Half Chick needed comfort and assurance. The Bremerton musicians wanted the good life.

Also, avoid letting each character be merely a carbon copy of the one who began it all. He may share the hunger or discontent, but he should have something distinctive about him. You might also find a story to tell where the characters do not get what they're seeking.

The craft in the writing of a story article is to let the emotion, motivation, and reader curiosity develop reality—a “now-ness”—that puts your reader in the scene in such a way that he is not conscious that you the writer are there. We want him to feel that the story is actually happening. Your faithful reporting of fact, your ability to write simply and tellingly, your sharing what you've seen and heard and touched and smelled and tasted will help you write a classic.

Although the situation may seem remote in the following exercise watch how Denise Tully in my class at Lib-

erty U. treated it as a cumulative structure.

She has one try to convince a second and the two try to convince a third and then they try to convince the police. She takes them to the site where they listen and tap. Watch how she brings fiction to fact.

First, the news story as it appeared in the papers.

Rescuers hear voice of boy under rubble

MEXICO CITY (AP) – Rescuers said a boy they believed has been trapped for 15 days beneath concrete and steel rubble from a killer earthquake called out a single word Friday as they tunneled toward him.

When the workers asked the boy at 10:45 a.m. if he was there, the child responded, “Si,” (“Yes”), said Jorge Negrete, a coordinator of the rescue effort.

Rescuers say they believe the survivor is 9-year-old Luis Ramon Navarrete Maldonado, who was at home in his apartment with his grandfather, Luis Maldonado, 57, when the three-story building collapsed in the Sept. 19 earthquake.

They said they believe only the boy is alive. The workers have been tunneling toward him since Sunday, guided by occasional taps, but say they don’t know exactly where he is.

Negrete said workers discovered a cistern in the rubble Friday and believed water from the cistern may be trickling down to the boy, buried under 30 feet of rubble in a patio area of the colonial building near the National Palace.

Family members, including the boy’s parents, paternal grandfather and cousins, maintained a constant vigil at the site.

Young soccer players from the family’s hometown of Chicoloapan brought a 2 ½-foot stuffed lion to the site Thursday. The toy bore a ribbon that read, “The soccer players of Chicoloapan wait for you, Luis.”

U.S. Embassy spokesman Vincent Hovanec said a Miami-Dade County rescue team that returned home earlier this week was traveling back to Mexico City with a heat detector in hopes of locating the boy by his body heat.

U.S. Ambassador John Gavin visited the site and offered further American assistance in the search.

President Miguel de la Madrid told the nation Thursday night that reconstruction of the shattered capital must begin immediately.

“We still have not completed the emergency stage, but we must immediately begin with national reconstruction,” he said in the nationally televised speech.

Rescue squads from the Mexican Red Cross and the government oil monopoly Pemex and a team of Algerian earthquake rescue specialists joined in tunneling toward the boy.

Rescue workers said they made periodic contacts with the boy through the night as they shouted to him and heard tapping noises in response.

Oscar Pardo, chief of the Red Cross team, said one such contact was made at 3:30 a.m.

“We yelled, ‘Monchito, answer our cries. Give four knocks.’ He gave four knocks,” Pardo said.

He said they tried again at 4:10 a.m. but were not sure if they heard knocks. Another try at 5:30 a.m. drew no response because “probably he went to sleep.”

Here is Denise Tully’s version of the story using cumulative structure.

Jorge Negrette lifted the broken cement blocks and threw them into the street. The dust made him cough. He stopped to rest. Sadly he glanced around at the collapsed building lying before him—a pile of concrete and steel rubble. The killer earthquake had done it.

He thought it must be the worst tragedy in Mexico City’s history. So many dead. Tears filled his eyes.

TAP—TAP.

He started. He listened closely. “What was that?”

TAP—TAP came quietly again.

“Someone . . . there’s someone in there!!” he shouted.

He clambered a short way up the pile, stopped and listened again.

TAP—TAP—TAP.

He grabbed a piece of concrete and tapped three times on the blocks.

TAP—TAP—TAP came back faintly.

“Oh, Lord Jesus, can it be?” he cried. “I must get help.”

Jorge slid down the pile on his feet and ran across the street shouting.

“Jose! Jose! Come quickly. I hear tapping in the rubble. Come quickly!” He ran up to Jose and grabbed his arm, tugging frantically. Jose stumbled forward and then pulled his arm free.

“Are you crazy, amigo? It’s been 15 days since the earthquake tumbled that building. No one could be alive now.”

“No, no. Please. I **DID** hear noise. Yes, please. Please come.”

“You’ve been working too hard on this clean up, Jorge. Take a rest.” Jose turned and started to work again.

Jorge lunged at him and knocked him to his knees.

“Please come see—I not crazy,” Jorge begged. He started dragging Jose along the ground.

“Okay, okay. Stop! I’ll go. Besides, if it is so, maybe I can get some credit for the find. Maybe fame . . .”

“Come on,” Jorge insisted. “Come on.”

Both men ran to the collapsed building. Jorge led the way up the pile about 10 feet.

“Shhh. Now, listen,” he said. He took a rock and tapped.

“What are we listen—” Jose started.

“Be quiet! Listen.”

TAP--TAP--TAP came faintly.

Jose sat straight up. “I heard it! I heard it! Amigo, I don’t believe it . . . 15 days . . . but who? How?”

TAP—TAP—TAP.

They heard it again.

Both men hugged each other and started shouting.

All the commotion caught the attention of Jose Maldonado.

He had lived in the building before it collapsed. The bodies of his son and father were buried in the rubble.

He scrambled up to where the

workers were. “What is it? What is it? Are you hurt?”

“No, no. Listen . . .” Jorge said. He tapped twice on the pile of concrete.

Silence.

“See, I tell you. You hear things.” Maldonado started to get down.

“Amigo, wait!” Jorge shouted.

Maldonado stopped. Ever so faintly they could hear “TAP—TAP.”

“No, that was just rock falling inside somewhere. It’s nothing. No one could still be alive.”

“No, no. We try it again, senor,” Jose said. He grabbed the rock from Jorge and started hitting the blocks with all his strength. Some of them crumbled under the blows.

Then everyone stood still and listened.

TAP—TAP.

“We must get the police!” Maldonado shouted.

The three men stumbled down the pile and ran to some police who were patrolling the street for looters.

“Come, come! We hear someone in the rubble!” Jorge shouted. He started to run, but the police didn’t move.

“This is a trick, yes? To get us

away from patrol? No one could be alive” one policeman argued.

“No, you are wrong. I heard it with my own ears. I did not believe it at first either,” Maldonado persisted.

“Yes, please just come and listen,” Jose said.

“Well, it is our job to check. But I don’t believe you. We two will go. You stay here,” the one officer ordered another.

As all the other men ran toward the rubble, Maldonado whispered silent prayers. Could it be his son? his father?

They scampered up the rubble. The police took charge. “Where did you hear the noise?”

“Right here somewhere. It is faint,” Jorge said.

The officer hit the blocks with a rock. They all listened.

Silence.

He tried again.

Silence.

“This is a trick!” the officer shouted.

“No, wait,” Maldonado said. “Are you in there?” he yelled.

A faint tapping could be heard.

The police exclaimed in joyful shouting, “Someone is alive alive!!”

Maldonado wanted to ask another question. He could not hold it back. “Please, please. Silence. I must ask another question.”

The men looked at each other, but got quiet.

“Please, are you in there . . . are you . . . your name . . . is it . . . Luis Ramon Maldonado?” he asked. “Tap two times for no, three times for yes,” he ordered as he prayed silently. “Please, Lord Jesus, let it be my son”

TAP—TAP—TAP.

We recreate the scene with cumulative. The Bible speaks of “in the mouths of two witnesses a thing is established.” Cumulative lets you gather your witnesses and establish your facts.

This story worked naturally because men are skeptics by habit. They’re impatient with one another. They interrupt. They put down. They suspect. They mock. But they all recognize and respect father-love and true emotion. Denise caught that and told it well. And she let three taps at the end speak volumes.

This is underwriting and it wins the day. There’s no need to speak of the jubilation that followed or the frantic digging to rescue the boy. We know that happened because our own emotions were touched by that TAP—TAP—TAP. The writer accomplished

what she set out to do. We remember this kind of story.

So what will you do with this technique? Not every story you have to tell will fit it. You've got to have a number of characters. They join one by one and seek a common goal.

You want to write up tenants at a housing project who band together to clean up their tenements and restore order? Use cumulative.

You want to tell the stories of mothers who enlist other mothers to help fight crime, stop drunk drivers, campaign for a candidate, give teachers the

freedom to swat in junior high?

Use cumulative.

Any time citizens unite to change something or children unite to plan a circus or mothers unite to organize a party, you've got one person with an idea gathering support.

Cumulative structure shows you, before you begin, where you're going and how you're going to get there.

Your story is the more compelling because it's structurally sound and more interesting because you've brought in lots of people.

GRAMMAR

DIRECTIONS: Circle the nouns in the following sentences and tell the structure of the sentence in the blank that follows.

1. *The main part of the house was an Elizabethan structure of warm red brick, (and) the elder portion, of which the earl was inordinately proud, still showed the outlines of a Norman keep, to which the Earl's ancestors had added a Lancastrian jail and a Plantagenet orphan asylum.* _____

2. *From the house in all directions stretched magnificent woodland and park with oaks and elms of immemorial antiquity, (and) nearer the house stood raspberry bushes and geranium plants which the Crusaders had set out on their way to the Holy Land (by Steven Leacock, "Gertrude the Governess").* _____

3. *Alice was as used to the muted slap of wavelets on the graveled beach as ("as" is here a coordinating conjunction) she was used to the tick of the clock by her bed or the moan of the pines by her door.* _____

4. *Incessant sound had latched her ear shut against itself.* _____

5. *How long it had been since the sea had fallen silent, she did not know* _____

6. *She was suddenly aware that no sound flowed upward toward her cabin from the beach* _____

7. *She stepped to the door and froze.* _____

8. *Sweeping toward her, one hundred yards out from shore, was a tidal wave that had sucked all smaller waters into itself like some malevolent monster.* _____

9. *And bearing down on her, it held her transfixed, eye to eye.* _____

10. *Fifty yards out, the wave crested slightly, breaking the spell.* _____

11. *Alice turned and fled through the house, grabbing only her clock from beside*

her bed as she rushed out the back door and clawed her way up the mountain slope behind. _____

12. Beneath her feet, the wave broke against her house, rooting it out of its foundations. _____

13. And in desperate effort to catch her, it sent a watery arm slapping up the side of the ravine to which she clung. _____

ANSWERS: 1. Part, house, structure, brick, portion, Earl, outlines, keep, ancestors, jail, asylum, compound-complex. 2. House, directions, woodland, park, oaks, elms, antiquity, house, bushes, plants, Crusaders, way, Holy Land, compound-complex. 3. Alice, slap, wavelets, beach, tick, clock, bed, moan, pines, door, compound. 4. Sound, ear (itself is a pronoun), simple. 5. Sea, complex. 6. Sound, cabin, beach, complex. 7. Door, simple. 8. Yards, shore, wave, waters, monster, complex. 9. Eye, eye, simple. 10. Yards, wave, spell, simple. 11. Alice, house, clock, bed, door, slope, complex. 12. Feet, wave, house, foundations, simple. 13. Effort, arm, side, ravine, complex.

REPETITIVE STATEMENT

King David used it centuries ago and since then writers have used it repeatedly to tie stories together.

David's Psalm 107 includes the following statement four times:

**Oh that men would praise the
Lord for his goodness,
And for his wonderful works to
the children of men!**

The repeated statement emphasizes what he wants his reader to learn. It crystallizes his argument. Each section rises to that climax. The psalm becomes even more memorable because of it.

Old-time minstrels would use the repeated statement in their songs. Every verse has its chorus.

We may begin with "Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam" but we always come back to our "Home, home on the range."

Repetition emphasizes theme.

Bill Grossman, in his marvelous children's book *My Little Sister Ate One Hare* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., a Random House Company, 1996), uses that title as his repeating statement.

He follows the "This is the House That Jack Built" structure of adding action to action and then returning to repeat the initial statement again. It's the same treatment as "The Twelve Days of Christmas My True Love Sent to Me."

He tells how the little sister eats one hare, two snakes, three ants up to nine gross things. With each addition, he returns down the list to the first and uses that as his repeating statement.

But when little sister eats 10 peas—normal, healthy food—she upchucks the whole mess.

Repetitive statement is not a structure in itself. It will be superimposed on any other kind of method you want to use. You merely condense your message into a few significant words and at appropriate times—usually at the end of a paragraph or at the end of some kind of important action—you repeat those very same words.

Obviously, you don't want to run the device into the ground by using it in every other sentence. You use it enough to make an impression. King David's four-time repetition sets a good example. Certainly use it at or near the beginning and near the end. Then use it twice in between.

For example, the following story uses this device. There's enough inten-

sity in the news story to lead the reader to believe the lady might have been just a little bit serious. Her pique makes the story even more believable.

When you find a human interest story in the newspaper or from a conversation with friends, put the story in your own words in a chronological narrative structure. Use any structure you want. It just seems chronological narrative would suit this kind of story best. Then repeat some significant statement four times.

Woman gets 60 replies on husband-for-sale ad

WESTMINSTER, Md. (AP) - A woman who put her husband up for sale as a joke says she got about 60 telephone responses to her classified ad, some of them serious. Now she's printed a retraction.

"I had no idea we would have any reaction like this," said Louise Horner, 40, a nurse at a Baltimore area hospital. "I felt like Ann Landers at the end of one day."

The notice, **"Husband for sale, cheap,"** appeared in the Carroll County Times for three days this week.

The advertisement included the following description: **"Comes complete with hunting and fishing equipment, one pair jeans, two shirts, boots, black Labrador re-**

triever, and 50 pounds venison. Pretty good guy, but not home much from October to December 4 and April to October. Will consider trade."

The volume of calls Mrs. Horner received prompted her to run the following ad in Friday's newspaper: "Retraction of husband for sale cheap, everybody wants the dog, not the husband."

Her husband, Charles Horner, appreciated the joke, she said.

Denise Tully wrote this little gem, using the sound of the telephone for her repeating statement:

"People sell so many different things in the want ads these days," Louise thought aloud to herself as she thumbed through the morning paper.

"Here's an ad that says the city is selling stop lights—only one dollar each. Interesting."

And then she bit her lip. "I wonder if . . . no . . . well . . . maybe someone WOULD buy . . ."

She dialed the phone.

"Hello. Carroll County Times classified," a crackly voice said. "Can I help you?"

"Yes. I want to place an ad for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. This is the wording . . ."

Tuesday morning Louise rushed to find her ad. "This is funny," she laughed. "No one will buy—"

B-r-r-ing! B-r-r-ing!

"Hello. Horner residence," she answered.

"Hello. Is this husband-for-sale cheap?" a voice inquired.

"Ummm, yes, it is."

"The ad said you'd consider a trade. How about a set of Samsonite luggage?"

"Well, I don't think so. I'm not really selling him," Louise said.

She was amazed someone really answered her ad. She looked at the paper again.

B-r-r-ing! B-r-r-ing!

"Hello. Horner residence."

"Husband-for-sale cheap?" a demure voice enquired.

"Yes."

"Would you consider a ten-day trial basis for the man?"

"Ha! Ten-day basis? I'm not selling him. It was a joke," Louise laughed.

Phone calls came all day.

Wednesday night, her husband glanced through the paper. "What will people think of next?" he laughed. "Hey, honey, listen to this ad."

B-r-r-ing! B-r-r-ing!

"Hello. Horner residence. Louise speaking."

"Yeah, sweetie, is this where the husband is for sale?" a kind elderly lady asked.

"Yes, it is, but—"

"Well, I don't want the old geezer, but I'd like to buy the dog. How much?"

"I'm sorry. The ad is a joke. Nothing is for sale."

"Who was that, dear?" her husband asked.

"Oh, some old lady."

"Anyway, listen to this ad— 'Husband-for-sale cheap. Comes complete with hunting and fishing equipment, one pair jeans, two shirts, boots, black Labrador retriever and 50 pounds of venison.'"

He stopped and laughed.

"That's not all. It says, 'Pretty good guy but not home much from October to December and April to October. Will consider trade.'"

"This wife has a good sense of humor. Hey! Louise, this is our phone num--"

B-r-r-ing! B-r-r-ing!

Denise did it again. It's the same tactic as her TAP—TAP—TAP. She

doesn't go for overkill. She lets the reader supply what follows.

It's effective.

Now, you use the same method in the following article about a youngster whose father dies at the wheel while driving along a freeway. You know the boy was talking during the whole time as and after he discovered his father was dead.

Give him a statement or a question that he will ask throughout the experience.

Let that statement act as an internal tie, uniting the beginning, middle and ending of the article. It should be a significant statement.

And, if it could have a double meaning at the end or if it could be all the more meaningful because of the way the story turned out, that would add to the professionalism and to the interest of the total piece. Maybe the lady who rescues him inadvertently says the same thing.

But if you cannot come up with a double meaning, leave it out.

It's better that you get the experience writing the article than that you sit for hours looking at blank paper or computer screen.

Write away!

Another delightful piece we printed when I edited "Moody Monthly" magazine came from Dr. Charles Swindoll whose speaking and writing ministries have helped millions.

His article, titled "Someday," uses a

repeated statement to build interest as well as to hold his article together.

Someday when the kids are grown, things are going to be a lot different. The garage won't be full of bikes, electric train tracks on plywood, sawhorses surrounded by chunks of 2 x 4s, nails, a hammer and saw, unfinished "experiment projects," and the rabbit cage. I'll be able to park both cars neatly in just the right places . . . and never again stumble over skateboards, a pile of papers (saved for the school fund drive), or the bag of rabbit food—now split and spilled . . . ugh!

Someday when the kids are grown, the kitchen will be neat. The sink will stay free of sticky dishes; the garbage disposal won't get choked on rubber bands or paper cups; the refrigerator won't be clogged with nine bottles of milk; and we won't lose the tops to jelly jars, catsup bottles, the peanut butter, the margarine, or the mustard. The water jar won't be put back empty, the ice trays won't be left out overnight, the blender won't stand for six hours coated with the remains of a midnight malt, and the honey will stay inside the container.

Someday when the kids are grown, my lovely wife will actually have time to get dressed leisurely: A long hot bath (without three panic interruptions), time to do her nails with-

out answering a dozen questions and reviewing spelling words, having had her hair done that afternoon without trying to squeeze it in between racing a sick dog to the vet and a daughter to the orthodontist.

Someday when the kids are grown, the telephone will actually be available. To adults. It won't be hot from being held an hour. It won't look like it's growing from a teenager's ear. It will simply hang there . . . silently and amazingly available! It will be free of lipstick, mayonnaise, *Frito* crumbs, and toothpicks in those little holes.

Someday when the kids are grown, I'll be able to see *through* the car windows. Fingerprints, licks, sneaker footprints, and dog tracks (don't ask) will be conspicuously absent. The back seat won't be a disaster area . . . we won't sit on jacks or crayons . . . the tank will not always be somewhere between empty and fumes . . . and (glory!) I won't have to clean up dog messes another time.

Someday when the kids are grown, we will return to normal conversations. You know, just plain American talk. "Gross" won't punctuate every sentence seven times. "Yuk!:" will not be heard. "Hurry up!" will not accompany the banging of fists on the bathroom door. "It's my turn" won't call for a referee. And a magazine article will be read without

interruption, then discussed at length without mom and dad having to hide to finish the discussion.

Someday when the kids are grown, we won't run out of bathroom tissue. My wife won't lose her keys. We won't forget to shut the refrigerator door. I won't have to dream up new ways of diverting attention from the gumball machine . . . or have to answer to "Daddy, is it a sin that you're driving 47 in a 30-mile-an-hour zone?" . . . or promise to kiss the rabbit goodnight . . . or wait up forever until they get home from dates . . . or have to take a number to get a word in at the supper table.

Yes, someday when the kids are grown, things are going to be a lot different. One by one they'll leave our nest, and the place will begin to resemble order and maybe even a touch of elegance. The clink of china and silver will be heard on occasion. The crackling of the fireplace will echo through the hallway. The phone will be strangely silent. The house will be quiet . . .

and calm . . .

and empty . . .

and filled with memories . . .

and lonely . . .

and we won't like that at all. We'll spend our time not looking forward to *Someday* but looking back to *Yesterday* and thinking, "Maybe we can baby-sit the grandkids and get some

life back in this place for a change!"

Could it be that Paul had some of this in mind when he wrote, ". . . I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." Maybe so. But then again, chances are Paul never had to clean up after a dog.

Now that is an article out of the life of everyone of us. We love it because we find that even great and famous people have the same household experiences we in our family do. He has met us where we are and shown us what we know. It is new and fresh, helped by the repeated statement. It is old and familiar with its attention to detail because we, too, were brought up in a household.

Isn't this an article you could do?

Another source of material comes from the daily newspaper. We read the headlines and whatever section is our favorite and put it out for the trash. Look for grist for your writing mill. Take an accident, perhaps (like the following article), and retell it with repeated statement or one of the many other methods in this series of lessons.

Use this article for your homework. Repeat a statement several times, making that repetition a significant part of your article. If you are going to make it the opening story for a gospel tract, you can use it as it happened because it is public knowledge when it appears in a newspaper.

Boy, 9, steers car to near stop after father's death

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) – A 9-year-old boy tried to wake his dead father as their car careened along in a freeway fast lane, then reached over the man's motionless body and steered the car to a near stop.

Another motorist stopped her own car and ran alongside the still moving vehicle to reach in and turn off the ignition.

"It was one of the most incredible incidents I've heard of in a long, long time," Anaheim Police Sgt. John Haradon said.

Michael Jay Tretter, 37, was driving home late Saturday with his two children, Joshua David, 9, and Kelly, 7.

Joshua slept as they traveled along the Orange Freeway, then woke up about 11:30 p.m. to find his father slumped behind the wheel, dead of an apparent heart attack, police said.

Unable to rouse his father, the boy took the wheel and drove through traffic for about a mile before cutting over to the center divider and scraping a concrete abutment at 30 mph, officers said.

The impact slowed the car, but it didn't stop.

Amy Kay Doyle, 24, of La Habra, driving home with her 2-year-old daughter, saw the car swerve into the center divider. As she passed, she saw the boy struggling to control it.

She parked her car on the divider ahead of Tretter's car and ran back, police said.

The car was still moving, but she

managed to reach in and shut off the ignition to halt it, she told police. She then flagged down another motorist who called paramedics.

Neither Joshua nor Kelly were hurt.

"He is a very bright boy, but this is amazing," said Joshua's mother, Debbie Tretter, 32, of Fullerton.

Item: Interviewing children who have witnessed a death requires unusual tact and compassion. They respond better when the interview is kept matter of fact than if the interviewer were to gush and grieve. That behavior would likely upset the witness. Writing up such an interview would not have to be as objective. Readers respond to a more tender treatment.

CATALOG

Actually, the Swindoll piece could well be inserted here under the “catalog” entry. Catalogue means that you bring separate items from everywhere as you write the article at hand. He brought items from the garage, from the kitchen, from the car, from the dining-room table, from the bath to prove that things will change when the kids are grown.

You would use catalog when you write up one by one the members of a football team for an article in the magazine sold before games.

Catalog goes beyond “series” by bringing in many more items for discussion. It may be harnessed by a repeated statement or some buckshot. It may be told in a how-to in a story covering the choosing of the county’s Strawberry Queen. How do you choose a queen when you have so many candidates?

One of the delightful articles we bought and printed when I edited “Moody Monthly” magazine came from Jim O’Bryon, a research mathematician for Ballistic Research Laboratories in Maryland. He used the catalog method to charm us editors and amuse our readers.

Happy Catfood to You!

Some of my fondest childhood memories are of adventures with my family—things that took time but little money. I remember mountain climbing with my parents in New England and picking strawberries with my grandfather on his farm near the Hudson River. What fun I had playing in a musical trio with my mom and sister, and building a ham radio transmitter with my dad. During these times I learned many spiritual lessons and asked life’s question.

Now, as a father of four, I want to provide my children with cherished memories. Since I work as a research mathematician forty hours a week, participate in a Christian concert ministry with the family, and announce at a local Christian radio station occasionally, free time is practically nonexistent unless I plan carefully.

My wife and I came up with one way to provide those special times with each of our four children, beginning with our oldest son’s ninth birthday.

I began preparing for Danny’s

birthday “time” present by thinking of ways we could spend quality time. These gifts can’t break, wear out or become obsolete. After some prayer and reflection the list included:

- a trip to the ice cream store with me
- a long game of Monopoly with me and two others
- a hike together at a nearby camp
- a water balloon battle with me, at night
- a five-mile bike hike
- target shooting, using slingshots at balloons floating in a local stream
- a trip to a local Christian bookstore to select an album
- spend a day together at the Air and Space Museum

The list also had a few clunks for fun, including a bag of sawdust and a can of cat food.

When his birthday arrived, Dan opened the gifts my wife had purchased. Then I presented my gift list with the instruction that he was to select as many things as he was years old.

I never expected such an enthusiastic response, not just from Dan but also from his younger brothers who were anxious for me to start a

similar list for them. It was also an eye-opener to see which things he selected and which ones he didn’t.

The list has now become a birthday tradition. I keep each list in my daily schedule book for ready reference. Each time we spend another gift together, I write down the date. We attempt to complete the list before the next birthday.

These are not the only times I spend with my children, but they are special times. Quality time spent together is time invested. As the children grow, the need to spend such time together increases. Since the child’s age determines the number of activities, our time gifts grow also.

Some time ago, I saw this sign in the window of a clock shop: “There’s no present like time.”

And there’s no time like the present to give the present of time.

Danny’s thirteenth birthday list:

- go water skiing together
- attend a pro soccer game—just the two of us
- go select a lawn mower for him
- go to work with me one day
- coach his soccer team next year
- one weekend playing tennis

- go crabbing on the Chesapeake Bay
- breakfast together at a local restaurant of his choice
- contribute \$5 toward Christian camp next summer
- go to a sports shop to help him select a tennis outfit
- bowling together three games
- five pounds of pennies

Doug's eleventh birthday list:

- be Father-for-a-day (keeping track of what has to be done)
- airplane ride with me
- two games of bowling together
- Amtrack train ride
- Help me clean the cellar for one hour (at my wages)
- Climb Mt. Washington
- Trip to the civic center to watch a hockey game
- To Toy Town to select a \$3 gift
- To an Orioles game together
- All the sugarless gum you can hold in one hand
- Visit for a day with friends who have a son the same age

On Chris's ninth birthday he chose:

- spend an overnight in the backyard in a pup tent

- to WRBS (station where I announce part-time) with me for the day
- to an Orioles game together
- travel to Baltimore airport to visit the control tower
- to MacDonald's for breakfast, just us
- trip to Bethlehem Steel plant together
- sleep in front of our fireplace together in sleeping bags (preferably during the winter)
- bike trip to a local park

You have seen him gang item after item, each one unrelated to the ones around it but each one at home under the umbrella of the overall article.

This is catalog, a structure that can be taken any where. It can encompass a run-down of Chinese restaurants in your town, books for children, relatives for your Christmas letter, classmates, kinds of roses for a garden article, campsites for a travel article, decorating ideas for a seasonal article. And the list could go on and on.

You'll note that Jim's article began with an explanation that recaptured the memorable times he had enjoyed with his parents and his desire to have the same kind of input with his own four.

He then with a transition sentence (Now, as a father of four, I want to provide my children with cherished memories) moved into the plan he and

his wife devised to make time for his kids that they would enjoy and remember.

He picked up on one of the items to show he was writing a birthday article: Happy Catfood to You!

Here's a torch you've got to catch! So often editors and readers read only the title. Dynamic titles can captivate readers.

Look for catchy phrases in your article as Jim did.

Look at the table of contents in magazines. You can borrow ideas at no charge because titles cannot be copyrighted. Experiment. You don't want to copy someone else's title, but

you can take and freshen up a title you like. Verb words give titles life. Key phrases, pointed questions, statements that crystallize the essence of your article make good titles.

You can wait until you have finished your article before you choose a title. You may even wait several days if one doesn't come. You might submit several titles for editors to choose when you send your story in.

Try freshening up titles of articles you've written but not been able to sell. That might turn the trick.

Keep your eyes open always for good titles you might use yourself.

SURPRISE ENDING

This world moves on the hinge of surprise.

Jennie decides to surprise her mother so she makes a cake. Walter decides to surprise his wife so he makes the bed. The kids want to surprise Dad so they wash the car. People do things they might not normally do so they can bring one another pleasure.

But there's another reason for surprise. You think you have all the marbles under your cup and that everything is under control. You might not like what's going on, but at least you know what you're doing. Then, in comes somebody who snatches the control away from you. You're floored—much to the delight of your reader.

It's this kind of surprise-ending story feature you want to learn to write. Surely, in all of your life someone has taken the words out of your mouth. Someone or something has happened in a situation that knocked your socks off, that left you spitless. (Pardon these old-time expressions. They come with my generation.)

You begin the story by telling the ordinary. Now, remember, the word "story" doesn't mean fiction story. Story means narrative feature (I know you know that). So, you begin by set-

ting the scene and mentioning the hero's problem. That hero may be you or the one whose life you're researching. You write in a friendly tone. You're sharing what you know with your reader. You're communicating truth.

But as you work out the story in your head or outline it on paper before you begin, look ahead to the end. Can you present your material—perhaps, by withholding some facts—so that you build suspense? Can you find coincidences that are totally logical; but, by withholding one, you heighten the other.

For instance, the chief character of your article is baby-sitting for a neighbor. The kids are finally upstairs and asleep. You've told the problems she had getting them up there and tucked into bed. She's exhausted. She turns on the television set and finds a mystery thriller. Your heroine loves a mystery.

In this one, a lady is driving her little boy home and is oblivious of the male corpse in the back of her station wagon. But the little boy is back there with it. He keeps asking his mother questions about it but she misinterprets them. Her answers are reasonable, but they don't satisfy the boy. But as she parks the car in the driveway and gath-

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ers her groceries, she discovers it.

Frightened, she races into the house and shuts and locks the front door. She puts the boy to bed, all the time looking over her shoulder. And then they hear the doorknob rattle. They're sure the corpse is up and trying to get in. The doorknob keeps rattling and the heroine is terrified. And then YOUR heroine becomes aware that HER doorknob is rattling and someone is trying to get into HER house. Talk about white fear!

You, the feature writer, have been telling a story objectively—just as your character lived it. You've brought us through the ordinary and built up to a crisis. Only then do we learn that the parents she was sitting for are back home now and they had forgotten their key.

It was purely coincidence that both doorknobs rattled at the same time. This coincidence was totally logical. But you withheld the information that the parents had returned home and in so doing you heightened the suspense. We have an unpredictable ending that genuinely surprises the reader.

Surprise ending stories usually proceed in chronological order until they reach a turning point when either a crisis occurs, a threat looms or an unusual decision must be made. The direction of the story changes. Surprising events occur that force the reader to exclaim that he never in a thousand years would have thought the story would end like that.

The turning point may hinge on something that happened before the story began. It may build on a threat of something to come that you hinted at in the beginning. It may precipitate itself from something that occurs as the story goes along.

The conclusion may mean life or death; it may free or cripple the main heroic figure; or it may be a happy, carefree family surprise. Whatever it is, the hero's humanness comes out.

Look what happened to two mothers who each claimed that the same baby boy was hers. I Kings 3 shows what happened when they came before King Solomon:

23. Then, said the king, The one saith, This is my son who liveth, and thy son is the dead; and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead child, and my son is the living.

24. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

25. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

26. Then spoke the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.

27. Then the king answered and

said, Give her the living child, and by no means slay it; she is the mother of it.

You have a surprise ending and you see humanity coming through. Mother-love yearns over her own son and is willing to give him up to another woman rather than see him slain.

It's totally plausible.

We've had a chronological narrative.

We've had a crisis where a decision had to be made.

We're startled by the thought that a king would order a baby cut in two; and, when we see his wisdom, we respect it and we're relieved that it ended right.

So what are you going to do with this new technique?

Here again, reach into your life. Surely you've been surprised somewhere along the years. Have you never played a trick? Never left someone speechless? Never pulled off the unexpected?

Tell us about it.

"Jack in the Beanstalk" had a surprise ending. The giant chased Jack and clambered down the beanstalk after him. Wham! Wham! went the axe and Kerboom! the giant went splat. We never expected at the beginning of the story that Jack would obliterate old Fee-Fi-Fo.

Little Red Riding Hood had a surprise ending. So did Goldilocks. So did

the Little Red Hen and the Bremertown Musicians.

Surprise endings occur everywhere. Two corporation executives are struggling for control and along comes Mr. Small Fry with an unexpected fortune who buys the whole business out.

Your dark horse candidate wins the nomination after a noisy, nasty primary.

The pimply-faced, pudgy musician wins the beautiful girl away from the strapping football pro.

Some little kid puts his finger in the dike and saves the whole country from destruction.

Editors love surprise ending stories because all the rest of us do. They're hard to come by.

Want to earn your letterman's sweater? Give us surprise ending stories.

My article on an experience I had as a real estate-salesman in Portland, Oregon, is a true one. I've intensified the ending. But what I hated, someone important liked. I tell it in chronological order. It is full of ordinary facts. He who thought he had all his marbles under his cup didn't. He was as surprised as the reader at how it all turned out.

Read on, McDuff. I hope you like it.

OPEN HOUSE

By Dick Bohrer

I'm down here in the basement, trying to figure this old furnace out. I've gone all through this place, turning on

the lights to brighten things up. It's gray outside—and cold.

If I thought it wouldn't blow up in my face, I'd manipulate the buttons on this furnace and warm things up. But I know that just as soon as I get involved figuring how to turn the gas on, I'll hear a car slow down out front.

You see, I'm in an empty house with my real estate signs in the front yard and down the street, their arrows pointing right in my direction. A big classified ad in the papers has announced that I'm here, ready, willing and able to sell this house.

I forget the furnace—it's too complicated—and I'm putting an old ironing board and some bed slats out of sight when I hear voices of neighborhood kids upstairs. I can just see them tearing through the house, so I roar up the stairs and into the living room.

But no one's there. I'd left the front door open and street sounds were coming in full throat. I'll have to remember to close the door when the crowd starts to come.

The sun appears briefly and then sags behind a cloud. The old house suddenly looks desolate, and I'm sure no one will ever stop out front.

I look around for a place to sit, since I have to stay till five and I forgot to bring a folding chair. But the

window sills are too narrow; the john is too—well, I wouldn't want a prospective buyer to find me coming out of there; and the kitchen drain board is too high off the floor.

I could just see myself clambering down from there as a customer walks in—the rim having cut off my circulation and my feet having gone to sleep. In walks the customer and I collapse at his feet. Talk about a royal welcome!

The cellar stairs are too dirty for me to sit on.

If I sit on the outside back stairs, I won't hear anyone come in; and, if I sit on the front stoop, no one will want to. Why had I let Betty take the car?

So, heron-fashion, I stand on one leg, then the other.

For amusement, I walk around the house, wondering why the seller won't follow my suggestions and clean the old place up. Because he knows I'm a super salesman doesn't mean he can't straighten things up a bit.

Turn-of-the-century appliances still squat in the kitchen; a jar of brown peaches, a can of linoleum paste, a stack of berry baskets, an old coffee pot, empty mustard jars, a dry cell battery and two torn kites litter the basement. At least the old tennis shoes are gone.

Hey, the sun is out. And a car is coming by! But—it—doesn't—even—slow—down.

I look around, making mental note of good sales points.

I practice out loud.

“Now this floor plan will allow your youngsters—you do have youngsters, don't you—ah, two?—wonderful! Now this floor plan allows them to come in—ages ten and twelve? Marvelous! Such an alert age—yes—now, this floor plan would allow them—Mary and Dan?—mmmm!—would allow them to come in the back door and go to their rooms without having to walk through the living room.”

My voice echoes through the empty house and my sales pitch sounds just as empty. The children next door sweep down their cement driveway on roller skates. The noise!

I've been here almost an hour and only one car has slowed down. I hear a door slam and sidle up to a front window. No one is in sight.

I do back kicks to take the kinks out of my knees. Only two more hours to stand.

Fortunately, I've brought along my listing book; so I stand at the mantel piece and look at the pictures of the hundreds of houses for sale in my town.

A car slows down. I rush to the window. It's only neighbors across the street, driving into their driveway. I pause to see what kind of people live there. I'm thinking of my sales pitch. A couple of long-haired kids leap out and open the trunk. And into the house they make trip after trip carrying armloads of drums.

A child scrapes by on his skates. Another car slows down out front and then drives on. Now the boy next door starts playing Bombardment with a basketball against his garage door. The thumping goes right through the old walls of the mausoleum my feet are freezing in.

I look around again. I'd never buy this house. I hate it. The stains of generations mark the hardwood floors, soot blackens the fireplace inside and out, the plaster is cracked, the woodwork is chipped, paint streaks smear the edges of the windows and the cabinets in the kitchen hang katty-wampus.

A car actually stops and a man comes in. Just as I open my mouth to start my speech, he pulls out a realtors card, says he has a client who might be interested and asks for a quick look-see.

“Sure,” I say. “Sure, go ahead. Look. Sell it out from under me. Bring a little joy to my life. Brighten up my solitary confinement.”

But by the time I finish my mumbling, he has breezed through the entire house and gone, leaving the front door open. Cold air blows in.

No one shows.

We should have printed "OPEN" in our classified ad in four-inch type.

"Come on, drive-bys. STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN," I shout.

No one shows.

I'm stiff from standing on the hearth. And I'm cold. It's five. My wife's at the door.

"You finally got here," I groan. "Nobody came."

Betty stands there, wide-eyed.

"What are you looking at?" I ask. "I always shake like this. It's cold in—"

"It's beautiful!" she gasps.

"What! You crazy?"

"I LOVE this living room. A coat of paint would do wonders. And that fireplace—why it's out of the eighteen hundreds!"

"You're out of your head," I say. "You must be kidding."

"Kidding? Why would I kid?" she says. "Let me see the rest of it." She starts walking from room to room.

"The neighbors are noisy," I say. She doesn't hear me.

"The closets ARE small," she says, "but they do have possibilities."

"But there are termites. The floor sags. There's dry rot!" She still doesn't hear me.

She walks into the kitchen and says she loves that, too.

Everything she looks at comes up roses.

I groan.

"Look," I say, "if you think it's so great, why don't you get your own real estate license and sell it?"

"But I wouldn't want to sell it," she gushes. "I want to buy it."

"BUY IT!"

"Of course."

"This filthy—"

"We'd have to paint it and put wall-to-wall carpeting in and re-do the kitchen and—"

"But I HATE this house."

"Oh, that's just because you've been standing up for three hours," she says. "Here." She pulls out a drawer from the kitchen cabinets and sets it on end.

"Sit down," she says. "We're going to stay a while. But watch out for that handle."

I always thought I should send this out to market, but I never did. Don't

you be like me. You send your articles out. Face the music. Bring home the bacon. Maybe you'll make the anthologies or win a Pulitzer. Too many of us, like the poet Emily Dickinson, are afraid of rejection. As she did, we put what we write in a drawer.

Shame!

But let's look back at what we've done. Our character is doing his work. He sees himself as an expert. We unravel him hour by hour as no one comes and then a competitor comes and then his wife comes. By this time he hates his work, he hates the house and he's ready to hate his wife.

Her wide-eyed response to everything he detests surprises him and it will surprise the reader.

In our next lesson, we'll study alternating statement and quote, a marvelous method for reporting a political

speech, a pastor's message, neighborhood gossip, an author's lecture, a comedian's stand-up routine.

We'll also study alternating action and reflection, another ever-so-natural way to heighten excitement while self-doubt eats at the heart. It can show how thoughtful people resolve conflicts. It can show the tentative side of dominant people.

People do what they are doing while reflecting on their traumas, their challenges, their failures, their opposition, their possibilities.

You can go any where with these structures, these recipes.

Again, if you know the recipe you can bake the cake.

If you know the structure, you can write the article.

Professor Dick

GRAMMAR

Item: *As a rule, each, every, either, neither, one, many a, a person and compounds with body and one (somebody, someone) take a singular verb.*

*Neither of the girls was implicated in the outbreak of measles at the penitentiary.
Everybody knows you can't break out of prison that way.*

Item: When two subjects are of different numbers or of different persons, the verb agrees with the subject nearer it.

*One gal and three guys are going roller skating down Main Street.
Neither two crutches nor one ski instructor is going to keep me from skiing again.*