

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000194 EndHTML:0000002715 StartFragment:0000002375
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Writing requires organizing my thoughts into a coherent form. An idea is brought forth in the first in the first paragraph, and then expounded on. I try to slip a bit of humor in, along with philosophy, science and local venacular. The last paragraph has to wrap it up somehow.

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I'm not trained as a writer, although Jim and Melissa gave advice when I started. They had just launched the Chronicle and pestered me to write a column, and I refused. After a few months of this, Jim offered me ten bucks and I acquiesced.

I began to study writing, asking Steve, Joe and other writers I knew to help me learn. I just got a lot of tips, like don't use the phrase "a lot" a lot. Instead, say what exactly happened. A lot of compost can mean 10 bushels, or 10 tons. That's a lot of difference.

Jim told me to write like I was talking to a friend. He knew my enthusiasm for gardening could be shared. I wrote about something I did that week, and usually still do. My tools, besides pen and paper, are an old dictionary, and an even older Roget's thesaurus.

I called my column "Small Farm Journal," which described well what I was doing. I wanted my neighbors who were interested in gardening and farming to know what was happening on the farm. I try to be specific and tell what varieties I was planting, how far apart, etc. Jim taught me to never use etc., so I threw that in for him.

He apparently liked my column as he gave me a raise. But he didn't like the title, saying it was

dull and that he wanted to change it to Barefoot Farmer. I didn't like it, but he was boss. He picked out a picture of feet walking on a lawn for the logo.

For several years I refrained from using big words or extended sentences. In 2001, Jim asked me to try writing in the third person. So, for one year I wrote a fictional column with BF and his intern Strymer. Jim wasn't impressed and asked me to go back to writing about what I did.

I can't type, or write very legibly. This results in typos, often funny and sometimes misleading. Form becomes farm because my a and o look the same, recently I wrote "America is now a net importer of food" (which I feel to be very newsworthy, and sad) but the now became a not, changing the meaning of the sentence. I feel sorry for the secretaries who have to unscramble these chicken tracks.

Unlike most writers, I don't use word processors or computers, and everything I type is published. The Chronicle gets the first publishing rights, and then I can do what I want with them. A few columns find their way into various organic journals, and we made a book out of some of the earlier ones. At one point they were in newspapers in Gallatin, Portland and Westmoreland, but I don't think they are anymore.

I seldom write at any time except early in the morning. With a pen and a cup of coffee, I stare at a blank page of a notebook. I guess I'm waiting for the muse. As I recall the previous week, something pops up that may interest my neighbors.

But since the column is 17 years old, it could be the seventeenth article on getting the garlic planted, cutting firewood, or preparing for the first hard freeze. I could rant against the devastation of rural economics by the cooperate agribusiness giants, or envision a utopia of small, solar-powered organic farms providing work, good food and happiness for everyone. Or maybe I will write about writing.