

The Five Ws of Story Telling and the GFO Writing Contest Writing Contest Genealogical Forum of Oregon

Think like a journalist and let your curiosity lead you. If you've selected the story you want to tell that fits the 2008 GFO Writing Contest theme *Saga of a Soldier* (see last month's *Insider* for particulars), you are now ready to inspect your research for story potential. Do you have all of the information you need or do you need to do more research? Do you have all of the information a journalist would need – *Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How?*

Who are the characters in your story. Do you know enough about them to make your readers care what happens to them?

What is the action your characters take. Do you know enough to develop an engaging plot?

Where & When is the setting that the action takes place. Do you know the setting well enough to transport your readers there?

Why is the motives of your characters for taking action. Do you understand the likely motives of your characters to make them real for your readers?

How becomes your narrative, the particulars of the event(s) in your characters' story; the interweaving of the who, where, what, when and why. Do you know enough to put together a well crafted story?

Inspecting your research from the *Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How* perspective might help you decide what additional information you need. Do just enough research to write your story. As genealogists, we quite often get stuck in the research and our stories never see the light of day; are never written down on paper. Give yourself enough time to write the story that will be treasured by generations to come.