

To; Entrants of the *Write Now* writing contest,

It's always a great honor to judge the *Write Now* short story writing contest. More than an honor, it gives me great pleasure to read stories from so many new, blossoming, and creative writers. I have no doubt that many of you talented writers will become published authors.

Years ago, I was researching what it took to become published and found an interesting statistic I'd like to share. Apparently, research has shown that each year, out of all the fiction manuscripts submitted to agents and publishers, the number selected for publication is about one tenth of one percent. That was a number I had a little trouble wrapping my mind around. So, I did a little math. Here is what I came up with. Let's form a line of all the want-to-be-published authors for a given year. Each writer holds a manuscript. We'll pack the line pretty tight. Each person gets only one and one-half feet of space. Now imagine that line as a mile long. How many writers do we select if we only want 1/10th of 1%? The answer is "one." Thinking of the odds, I thought them pretty slim. Only one person from a mile of writers gets published? But then I thought about the odds if you don't get in the line. The answer is "ZERO."

Now, many years later, I'm glad I stood in that line. My congratulations to all of you who chose to stand in the line for this writing contest! Not everyone won first place. But you are all winners!

There are a couple of other items I found when I was doing my research. One of my favorites is the comment, "The better the story, the more forgiving the reader." I like that a lot and have found it true. If it's a great story, readers will overlook that missing comma or misspelled word or two. Don't worry too much about the "grammar cops." Focus on being a good storyteller. For all of the stories I judged this year, I don't remember if there were any technical problems, which means the stories were all great.

I thought about giving some constructive feedback. But if I did for a few stories I would feel bad about not doing that for all of them. So, to be fair and not feel guilty, I have none. I do have one comment though. I don't know who won but I'll reveal which story stuck in my mind the most. It's the "Elevator Operator." I thought it highly creative. And more than just being a story, it gave me some things to think about. Good work.

Sorry no award ceremony. Forgive my typos and once more, 'Congratulations. You all stood in the line!'

Mike

J. Michael Blumer,
Author, who stood in the line.