Acknowledgments

I wish I could name everyone who has nurtured or inspired my writing. I have learned from more teachers, readers, writers, and word lovers than I can count.

Thanks to Joe Wycoff and the other team-teachers at Chesterton High School who seared the keyhole essay structure into your students’ minds. That odd keyhole shape, which you drew over and over on the chalkboard, saw me—and eventually my own students—through many a term paper. You taught me the importance of structure.

Thanks to whoever donated that Hemingway book to the library of my Austrian high school. Helga Gruber, it had to be you. When, for the first time in my life, I hungered for English, Hemingway fed me.

Thanks to Russ Tutterow at Lake Forest College for opening the stage to me when I took a notion to write plays and for patiently coaching me on all things drama.

Thanks to Rosemary Cowler at Lake Forest College for bringing even the dustiest literature to pulsing life for all who had the good fortune to sit in your classroom. I’ll never forget your delivery of this Beowulf line in Old English: “WAY-och under WOCH-num, WAY-oh THIN-dum THA!”

Thanks to the mentors, whose names I wish I could remember, who said yes when I was looking for summer jobs that would pay me to write, including one job at a small-town newspaper and another at a big-city public-relations firm.

Thanks to Ray Carver and Toby Wolff, who saw enough promise in my short stories to accept me into the Syracuse University graduate writing program. You made us, your lucky students, feel that our words mattered.
Thanks to Jean Howard at Syracuse University for guiding me through an exhilarating summer of intensive work on that *Shakespeare Quarterly* article. You have set my standard for collaborative revising (re-vising!).

Thanks to Karen Szymanski, who had the vision to start a technical-writing internship all those years ago at Magnavox CATV and who had the heart to let both applicants share in it. That internship kicked off a long career for me. Until you came along, I had never heard of tech writing, and I had never dreamed that I could make a living as a writer.

Thanks to Don Flynn and Bob Odell, who hired me at Genigraphics for my first tech-writing job, taught me about coneheads and pinheads, and showed me what a blast people can have at work.

Thanks to Anne Coffey and Sally Cutler, who hired me at Word-Wrights (despite my omitting some hyphens in that proofreading test) and who taught me how to run a writing consultancy.

Thanks to Lori Lathrop, whose workshop introduced me to the exquisite complexities of book indexing.


Thanks to Erica Caridio for reviewing this book’s indexes and sharing your gentle wisdom.
Thanks to Cheryl Landes for helping me understand the limitations of today’s e-book indexing options and for working toward better options for tomorrow’s writers. Your generous, insightful review of this book’s indexes made a difference. You called attention to some blind spots. What a great feeling to know that I have none left.

Thanks to Jan Wright for the additional insights that helped make the indexes work better both for technology and for readers. I appreciate all that you, too, are doing to improve tomorrow’s e-book indexes.

Thanks to Scott Abel, the—*The*—Content Wrangler, for writing my foreword and for sharing your enthusiasm and sense of humor with the wide world of fellow wranglers.

Thanks to the pros whose expertise and cheer helped me navigate the many stages of developing this book: Jessica Glenn (of Jessica Glenn Book Publicity) for your boundless book-shepherding abilities and your unparalleled connections; Tina Granzo (of City Beautiful Design) for your impressive skill and unfailing responsiveness in creating the book’s website; Brian Hull (of BriAnimations Living Entertainment) for illustrating the book with such flair; Vinnie Kinsella (of Indigo Editing & Publications) for your insights on the text and your careful design work; Ali McCart (of Indigo Editing & Publications) for your editing acumen and your scrupulous attention to detail.

Thanks to the “lackadaisicals” for the eight-year conversation about books and life. Every author dreams of readers (and friends) as astute and passionate as you: Karen Baum, Teresa Craighead, Carrie Koplinka-Loehr, Tracy Mitrano, Rebecca Nelson, Sue Rakow, Christina Stark.

Thanks to Curt and Martha Johnston for being who you are and for raising a son who loves words. Without him (which is to say without you), I might have written a book, but I could not have written this book.

Thanks to Shannon Wood for your faith in this book through its two-year odyssey and for your lifelong faith in me.

Thanks to my sister, Wendy Hood, for commenting on my every blog post. You enrich my writing almost as much as you enrich my life.

Thanks to my dad, Dennis Riefer, who always kept books around and who believed that I could do anything.
Thanks to my mom, Stella Robertson, the clearest explainer I know. No wonder I gravitate toward how-to writing. You taught me how to knit and how to pack a suitcase. You taught me, and are still teaching me, how to live.

Thanks to my daughter, Elizabeth Poulsen, for your careful reading of early versions of these chapters. Your insights opened new possibilities for the book. You’ve been opening new worlds to me since the day you were born.

Thanks to my son, Brian Poulsen, for the skill and professionalism you brought to the two line drawings and the propositionally dense logo (and thanks for teaching me about propositional density). You’ve been inspiring me since the day you were born.

Thanks to my husband, Ray Johnston, for sustenance of every kind, for rescuing this book from my attempts at sports references, for laughing in all the right places, for knowing when to say, “It’s not done,” and for finally saying, “It’s done.”