WRITING CAPTIONS THE EASY WAY

Why are we seeing yearbooks without captions? Because staffers think writing them is too hard. Staffers think it is too difficult to think up just the right thing to say about that particular picture. That is not the case. Let’s talk captions.

Let’s write a caption for this rainy homecoming photo—one that tells everything we need to know about the picture and will also grab the readers’ eye and get them to read it.

Step 1: Who is in the photo? Homecoming King Bob Fitzsimmons and Homecoming Princess Colleen Belkat.

Step 2: What are they doing, and what happened as a result of what they did? They are celebrating their coronation as homecoming king and queen in a torrential downpour. They got soaking wet, but the crowd was able to stay drier by not moving for the coronation.

Step 3: When did all this happen? During halftime of the St. Regis football game on a very rainy late October night.

Step 4: Where did this take place? On the 50-yard line of our football field.

Step 5: Take those facts and create your basic caption. Having fun despite the weather, Homecoming King Bob Fitzsimmons kids around with Homecoming Queen Colleen Belkat as the rain pours down on the St. Regis game halftime.

Step 6: Add a second line if there is additional information that does not fit into the basic caption. The coronation was originally scheduled for the gym, but no one in the crowd wanted to move during halftime and lose their dry bleacher seats.

Step 7: Edit the two sentences. Remove redundant words and change the order so as not to make all captions begin with the people’s names.

Step 8: Add an eye-catching kicker. This will bring the reader in graphically. Never use more than one line or three words—summarize the caption. Check out the actual caption below the photo.

Step 9: Add a second line if there is additional information that does not fit into the basic caption.

Students may not realize how much they will forget between now and their 40th reunion. But by then, it is doubtful if they will recognize themselves in the yearbook, let alone their friends.

Always remember, yearbooks are written for today and for fifty years from now.

GREAT CAPTIONS

Each of the captions on this page are superb examples of what a reader hopes to see in his or her yearbook. They fully tell the story of the photo they are captioning. Three of them contain quotes, which made them even easier to write. Strive for this kind of captions in your book.

The caption at left, from the 2014 Whitewater High School (Fayetteville, GA) Vision, just works on all accounts. It’s fun, it’s descriptive, it identifies the person in the photo and it has a photo credit above the pic. Outstanding.

The top photo and caption treatment from the 2014 Loudoun Valley High (Purcellville, VA) Saga has great graphic pull. Looking around the page, you spot it and want to read it. The caption is entirely a quote from someone in the photo, and that truly works. Add a great kicker and a photo credit, and you have one great caption.

Above is a caption treatment from the 2014 Issaquah high (Issaquah, WA) Sammamish, and it also has it all—narrative to open and a quote to close, with a one-word kicker to top it all.