Charitable deeds aid members in need

PICKING UP my phone, I immediately knew that Stuart was ill. His voice was a whisper, his words intoned desperation. He refused, at first, to tell me what was wrong.

We were colleagues on a newspaper 15 years earlier. He left to freelance from Spain, but we always enjoyed a drink when he was in town. Now he had developed a life-threatening chest condition. His medical insurers had, on a technicality, refused some of his clinical bills. Too ill to work for months, he was about to be thrown out of his flat as a result of rent arrears.

Fortunately, I had an idea. After discussion with LFB's then Welfare Officer (Stuart is a branch member), I approached NUJ Extra, on my friend's behalf. NUJ Extra is an independent body by and for our union, to help members in need. Within days, the trustees considered Stuart's case and provided nearly £5000 to help him out.

Since then, I am happy to say, Stuart has made a full recovery and is now working as an editor on an international glossy magazine. He recently told me how important was the help from NUJ Extra. "I was at rock bottom, it hadn't occurred to me that the union could help. The practical assistance made an enormous difference, but more than that, realising that I was part of a caring professional community was what helped me to turn the corner."

Supporting members in need has been an NUJ commitment since our union's inception, explains Chris Wheel, the chair of the charity's trustees. "Unions have always been about mutual assistance and we continue that to this day. Ours is a pre-eminent profession and we have a duty to support each other."

Meanwhile, I had been thinking about what could provide help where the need is most acute. So if you do feel that NUJ Extra could help you, please get in touch, and rest assured, it will be in the strictest confidence: tim@timdawn.demon.co.uk © Tim Dawson

Dutch freelances await payment judgment

A JUDGE in Amsterdam has deferred judgment in a case – the first of its kind – brought by two Dutch journalists who are taking their claim to court over their low fees of €15 an hour. Writer Britt van Uem and photographer Ruud Rogier have taken their former client, regional news publisher Persgroep (“Press Group”) to court, in a landmark action based on the Autorscontracttenwet (Authors’ Contracts Act), which stipulates that remuneration for work must be “fair” – see the May Freelance for background.

In that report we got the photography rate wrong: it is a mere €42 per photo.

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be conducted in a world made more of verbs than nouns...The thoughts in it have not been 'mine' alone but have assembled themselves in a field of interaction which has existed between myself and numerous others, to whom I am grateful. They particularly include: Pamela Samuelson, Kevin in Kelly, Mitch Kapor, Mike Godwin, Stewart Brand, Mike Holderness, Miriam Barlow, Danny Hillis, Trip Hawkins, and Alvin Toffler. However, I should note in honesty that when Wired sends me a check for having temporarily 'fixed' it on their pages, I alone will cash it...

Meanwhile, I had been thinking about my "moral rights" in my work. The "moral rights" to defend the integrity of the work and identification of its creator were then hardly known in the US, where they exist only for works of visual art produced in a signed and numbered edition of 200 copies or fewer.

I published Moral Rights and Authors’ Rights: The Keys to The Information Age – my one refereed journal paper. I concluded: "The needs of the citizen and of society for trustworthy news and innovative entertainment are best met by the direct relationship of the citizen with individual human authors... Such a relationship forms the legal basis for a People’s Media – for the potential of the technologies to be developed to maximise open and trustworthy communication with and between citizens". We had moved to almost opposite conclusions.

Jaron Lanier is best known for coining the phrase “virtual reality” in 1987. He is also a musician.

Jaron took up John’s idea up enthusiastically. It was influential – often downed to the denial that anyone, anywhere, wants to be paid.

But then in 2012 he published Who Owns the Future, in which he argued that authors and performers being paid for the distribution of our work was absolutely crucial. Indeed, we should all be paid for our social media postings – because they, alongside the unauthorised copying of professional creators’ work, are where the profits of Twitter and Facebook come from.

What had changed? I found a 2013 talk at the Conway Hall in London in which Jaron recounts noticing how often he was playing benefit concerts for musicians who had given up on income from publication and distribution, spent the money from performances – and now couldn’t afford healthcare.


More online
Do keep checking www. londonfreelance. org/ff for updates and expanded reports – including an engaging account of a media literacy workshop, at www. londonfreelance.org/ff/1905mlw.html

John Perry Barlow Image CC:BY Joi Ito

John Perry Barlow gave up on much income from publication and distribution of his works and spent the money from performances. He suffered a heart attack on 27 May 2015, while in hospital after surgery following a Staphylococcus infection. He spent months in hospital – and the John Perry Barlow Wellness Fund was established in October 2016 to allay outstanding medical bills. A benefit concert was held on 11 October 2016 at Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley, California to benefit the fund. John Perry Barlow died on 7 February 2018. © Mike Holderness

Byline Festival reduction for NUJ members

As NUJ members can avail yourselves of a substantial discount for Byline Festival 2019. This event invites you to dance, discuss, laugh and change the world on 23-26 August at Pippingford Park, Nutley, East Sussex, TN22 3HW. The link for tickets at the NUJ discount rate, starting at £25, is at www. bylinefestival.com/nuj19 and London Freelance Branch plans to have a stall or tent at Bylinefest this year, as it did in 2018. © Matt Salusbury

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