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Wisdom From The (Not So Secret) Order of The Titanides: Vol. 4

Rediscovering the Lost Art of Visiting

Grandma Reeder's forgotten secret to building your empathy muscle, improving your copy chops, and sparking your creativity...



Every summer when I was growing up, my mother would ship me off to spend a few weeks with my grandparents, Margueriete and Robert Reeder, on their farm in Tuscola, Illinois.

I'd help my grandmother with the cleaning and cooking. I'd play dress up with my cousins who lived across the fields. I'd tag along as my grandfather fed the sheep, collected the eggs from the chicken coop and filled the birdfeeders for the birds my grandmother loved so much. Occasionally, I'd walk the beans, hoeing the stray corn and button weeds.

Mostly, I was bored a lot. I read dozens of books lying on a blanket in the front lawn. I'd go outside and look for meteor showers and falling stars at night. I'd walk the perimeter of the farm, jumping over fences and crawling through the windbreak like a long-lost pioneer.

But those long, boring summers taught me one of the most important skills – a skill I've used to grow my business and build my reputation as a top copywriter. I call it...

"The Lost Art of Visiting"

Visiting is a bit like conversational badminton, where you pass this birdie back and forth from topic to topic, wandering here and there. And my grandmother and my great aunts were masters at it.

My grandmother, Margueriete, was one of six sisters. There was Myrtle, Dorothea, Winifred, Genevieve and Bernice, and they all lived within an hour and a half of each other. During the long hot summers, my great aunts would sit on folding chairs under the shade tree in the front lawn drinking tall glasses of iced tea. They'd sit there in their flowered house dresses and visit for hours while I fell asleep on a blanket in the grass listening to the sound of their flat midwestern voices.

My Aunt Bee might say, "We got three inches of rain in town last week." And then Aunt Winifred would say, "We only got two inches in Bridgeton." And then Aunt

Gen might say, "Do you remember that summer when it rained so much, and the Ford got stuck in the mud and we had to use the tractor to pull it out?" And Aunt Dot might chime in, "Remember when Myrtle and Floyd bought that brand new Model A, and Bob took Margueriete courting in it?"

Listening to my great aunts visiting taught me how to hold a conversation with anyone, on any topic. It forced me to get over my shyness around strangers. It taught me how to start a conversation and how to pass that badminton back and forth and keep it going.



Knowing how to "visit" makes you a better networker. It helps create connection and intimacy with your prospect. And it's the secret to writing more compelling sales copy.

Dr. Sherry Turkle, a media scholar, psychologist and professor at MIT, studies the relationship between people and technology. In her new book, *Reclaiming*

Conversation, she explains that face-to-face conversation, or "visiting" as my grandmother called it, is critical to developing trust and self-esteem. It builds empathy, friendship and intimacy. And it increases our capacity for self-reflection and solitude. These are all key skills for any great writer or human being.

Visiting boosts your creativity.

I was talking about this with another top copywriter, Henry Bingaman. Henry Bingaman and Jedd Canty are two of the most successful copywriters at Money Map Press. Together they have generated millions of dollars in revenue, probably more than any other team in Money Map history.

Henry was telling me that he and Jedd "visit" on the phone while they are driving to and from work. He said they will just be bullcraping about a bunch of different topics and inevitably they'll start talking copy and end up generating new ideas and solving problems.

Dr. Turkle put it this way in a recent interview in *The Atlantic*, "Real in person conversations are messy, full of pauses and interruptions and topic changes and awkwardness. But the messiness is what allows for the true exchange of ideas. It gives you the time and the permission to think and react and glean insights. You never know when the interesting bit is going to come."

If you don't know how to hold a real, in-person conversation, you'll miss the interesting bits.

Visiting is the secret to becoming a super networker.

Another great copywriter friend of mine, John Carlton, wrote about visiting on his blog, *The RANT*. In Career Hack #33, John calls "visiting," or the art of making conversation, the main tool you need for great networking. And he says most folks have no clue how to do it.

According to John, you need at least three different styles of conversation...

- *Super polite and deferential. (You're on guard against offending anyone or coming across as too aggressive. Best to use this style when you're unclear who you're speaking with.)*
- *Collegial secret-sharing. (This involves the hushed "it's just you and me, my friend" speaking voice that implies that some serious info is now on the table. Good to use when you've established some connection and wish to start trading favors or info or introductions.)*

- *And raw locker-room style bonding. (If you can discover what floats your prospect's boat in humor, or politics or entertainment... and you have some insight or experience in the same vein... then you can sometimes speak very directly with him and trigger "hey, he's a good guy after all" feelings. We like those who are most like us.)*

Here's how it works...

When I first met John Carlton many years ago at his event in San Diego, I was super deferential. I told him how much I admired his copy. I sent him a testimonial for his course, *Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets of a Marketing Rebel*. I was in awe of him.

Then a couple of years ago, Kevin Rogers invited me to speak at Copy Chief Live, and I spent some time hanging out with John. We sat next to each other at dinner and ended up having a fascinating conversation about contemporary art and creativity. And it turned out we shared many of the same philosophies about the creative process. We had moved on to collegial secret-sharing.

Then recently I ran into John again at a Gary Halbert memorial event in Las Vegas. I ended up eating dinner with John and a small group of guys who are legends in the business. I was the only woman at the table. The conversation rapidly descended into locker-room style humor, and I gave back as good as I got. By the end of dinner, John had nicknamed me "M" after Judi Dench in the James Bond movies. Best nickname EVER!

Knowing how to make conversation, or visit, is the key to developing real relationships, and it's one of your strongest advantages. Do it right, and you've got a huge advantage. Do it wrong, and you can ruin a relationship before it ever begins.



The very best networkers use each of these styles. And they have the ability to shift seamlessly from one to the next when social cues dictate a change in the process.

It was my grandmother who forced me to learn this skill. Every time I came to the farm, my grandmother would insist that we make the rounds and visit all of my great aunts, all of their children and all of my cousins.

I remember sitting in the driveway outside my Cousin Virginia's house refusing to go in. I was this awkward teenager. I didn't know my cousin and her family that well. But my grandmother (oh, she was stubborn) would not leave the driveway. She demanded that I go in, and that I sit down, and that I visit with my cousins. Now, I'm grateful to her because...

Visiting is one of the best ways you can get to really know your customer.

Now everyone tells you these days that you have to get to know your customers. But no one really tells you how to do that.

They tell you, "Be sure to talk to your prospect. Know what motivates them. Know their pain points." Then they tell you to do this complicated survey until you feel like you're someone in a mall accosting people with a clipboard asking questions. It feels more like a dental exam than two human beings just talking to each other.

That's because we have forgotten how to visit. MIT's Sherry Turkle explains that "visiting" allows us to be fully present and vulnerable. When you visit with someone face-to-face, you make eye contact, you notice their tone and posture, you learn how to respectfully confront someone, how to comfort them. In short, "visiting" creates empathy and intimacy. And this is one of the most powerful skills we have as copywriters.

When I first started working with A-list copywriter Parris Lampropoulos, one of the very first assignments he gave us was to go out, sit down and have a conversation with the prospect. My elderly neighbor, Deana, had arthritis. So I went next door, sat down and visited with her.

We talked about her husband, her kids, her grandkids. Then I looked down at her hands and they were these gnarled, tangled messes on her lap. I asked her about those hands.

She told me what happened one year when she was about to go on vacation with her family. I think they were going someplace in Florida. She and her husband were both blue collar workers at Kroger, the local grocery store chain. They had six kids, so this was a big deal for them to all go on vacation together.

A girlfriend of Deana's asked her to fill in for her at the deli counter at Kroger the day before she was supposed to leave on vacation. Deana spent the entire day hauling cheese and meat, putting it on the slicer and shoving it back and forth with her hands. The next day they were leaving on vacation, and her hands and arms were so sore, and so swollen, and so inflamed that she couldn't even drive.

She was in excruciating pain. She cried all the way down in the car, and she spent most of that vacation in the hotel room. Now whenever I write about arthritis remedies, I see Deana's hands.

Mercy Kay is a Titanide who understands the power of visiting. She was chosen to train with me in Advertorial Bootcamp at Money Map Press. We were working on advertorials for a marijuana investing product.

Mercy had a friend who had a membership at a local golf course, which was swimming in financial investing prospects. So Mercy took herself off to the golf course and sat down and visited with potential investors. She asked them about investing in the marijuana industry. She ended up getting an entire download of objections, which she used to write better advertorials.

Visiting improves your copy chops...

Not only does knowing how to visit help you connect with your prospect, but I think it's also one of the reasons why I am so good at transitions from one idea to the next. From one sentence to the next. From one paragraph to the next.

Because ultimately, that's what conversational badminton, or visiting, is. That person says something, you find something in their statement, in their comment, that you can then pull, like a thread, to then pass it back to them. And that's exactly how you make connections between ideas and sentences.

The problem is, most of us have forgotten how to hold a simple conversation with another human being.

When my grandmother passed away, the funeral was in Tuscola, of course, where she had lived for most of her life. The visitation went from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and I bet close to 200 people came through that line to give their condolences to our family.

My youngest sister, Bethany, was on my left, and my middle sister, Jennifer, who many of you know, was on my right. As each person came through the line, they would introduce themselves, and we would visit with them for a while and then move onto the next person.

Bethany was just standing there, awkwardly trying to deal with this mass of humanity. But Jennifer had spent many of those summers on the farm just as I did, and the two of us were like conversational badminton masters. Someone would come up to us and say, "I used to serve on the school board with your grandfather." And Jennifer and I would manage to turn that into a conversation about rural school consolidation... or maybe we'd share a story our mother told us about high school in Tuscola in the 1950s... or I'd talk about my son's current report card.

The conversation would drift from topic to topic just like it did with my great aunts until the next person in line came up, and we would find something else to visit about.

Bethany just looked at Jennifer and me and said, "How do you do that? How do you just stand here for three hours and talk about nothing to complete strangers?"

It's the lost art of holding a conversation, and gently helping someone to keep it going by throwing another gambit over the net that they can pick up on. A single connection. A thread. This is how you get to know each other as human beings.

Contrary to popular belief, cell phones don't encourage conversation, they KILL it.

In today's world, where we treat our cell phones more as an appendage than a tool, we are losing the art of human conversation. And as Dr. Turkle points out, this inability to connect through face-to-face conversations undermines our relationships, our creativity and our productivity.

- The Pew Research Center did a study in 2015, and they discovered that nearly 9 out of 10 cell phone users check their phones during social gatherings. Over 80% of them said it hurt the conversation.
- Another study showed that just placing your phone face down on the table when talking with someone changes what you talk about and the degree of connection you feel. Even silent phones disconnect us from each other.
- And scientists at the University of Michigan reviewed 72 different studies over the past thirty years and they found a dramatic drop in empathy among college students after cell phones became ubiquitous.

Visiting is a lost art. Go and stand in line at a coffee shop and notice what happens. If the line is not moving, and you're standing there for two or three minutes waiting for your coffee, look around you. I guarantee you, everyone will be standing there staring down at their cell phones.

I know I'm going to come across as one of those crotchety old people. But I remember when waiting in line was when you would practice visiting.

You would be standing there bored, and there was nothing to do. There were no devices you could hold in your hand. So you'd strike up a conversation.

You might say to the person in front of you, "Oh that's a lovely scarf. Where did you get it?" And they might say, "Oh on my last trip to Ecuador." And you'd say,

"Oh my God, I've always wanted to travel overseas. What was it like in Ecuador?" And they might say, "Oh I served in the Peace Corps there when I was in my 20s." And you'd say, "Oh that's remarkable. What was that like?"

And by the time someone delivered your coffee, you knew something about this person. You had formed a human connection with them.

How will you get to know anyone – whether it's your prospects, your neighbors or your children – if you don't have conversations with each other?

If you walk into a waiting room or stand in line these days, you'll notice everyone is sitting there on their cell phones. No one is making small talk. No one is "visiting" any more.

I was at a diner in Cincinnati with my husband Tom a few weeks ago getting breakfast. It was crowded and about 10 of us were crammed in a small space by the counter waiting for a table. There was an older gentleman sitting on the bench waiting, and he struck up a conversation with everyone around him. He talked to everyone.

And it was funny to watch how people reacted. Some were horrified and they clutched their cell phones like an emergency raft. Others engaged with him, talking about the Cincinnati Bengals or the bad weather or local politics.

So many times, the random "visiting" conversations I've had with strangers in airports and waiting rooms have ended up making my day. I've met fascinating people or just formed a brief human connection. Social media is not the same as engaging in face-to-face interactions.

The critical difference between texting and talking.

Texting, posting, and Instagramming is the opposite of open-ended, spontaneous conversation. It's about showing off, posturing, judging, shaming, blaming, self-promoting... pretty much the opposite of real conversation.

Real human conversation is awkward, messy and filled with boring bits. But it's when we stumble, or misspeak, or fall silent that we reveal ourselves to each other. It's when we are most vulnerable. It's also when we are most likely to stumble on new ideas.

I attended a recent Titans Mastermind meeting in January, and I shared my business plan for the Titanides with a room full of the smartest most successful

marketers in the business. And I asked them for their feedback.

The result was one of the most difficult and challenging conversations I've had in years.

"Do you want them to be grateful or do you want them to respect you?"

Someone asked me why I ran this group more like a charity than a business. I said I wanted these resources to be available to all women, but I was struggling to pay for it. I confessed that I'm still not at breakeven yet and I have so many things I want to create and build for women here.

Then one of the most successful marketers I know asked me, "Do you want these women to be grateful or do you want them to respect you?" And those words went through me like an arrow.

Then fellow Titanide Abbey Woodcock shared her pricing survey with us this month, and I was shocked at the massive pay gap between men and women in this industry. It was worse than I expected. I asked myself, "What was I teaching? What kind of example was I setting by not charging what the Titanides is worth?"

Finally, David Deutsch, my longtime friend and mentor, emailed me and said, "You make it seem more like a charitable donation when it's really such a no-brainer, easy decision to pay a measly \$600 bucks a year to be hooked into resources and a network like that – and a person like you. And you can – and probably should – quote me on that."

Instead of arguing, I did what I've been telling so many of you to do when receiving feedback. I simply listened and took the coaching.

If you were at the Titanides Gala last fall, then you know that I encouraged everyone to become a sustaining member. I asked everyone to contribute \$29 to \$49 a month depending on their circumstances. Many of you signed up for a founding membership in the Titanides, and I'm incredibly grateful.

I also offered to "pay it forward" with a \$1.00 annual membership for anyone who could not afford to pay. And I continued to deliver all the membership benefits to all Titanides, even those who did not join. And that offer still stands for now.

But going forward, I will be taking the coaching. I'll be working hard to determine a fair and sustainable pricing structure and to follow my own

advice and charge what I am worth.

Because if we are going to continue as a community, we must become fully self-sustaining through our own contributions, as my favorite 12-step fellowship puts it.

So, if you find value in this newsletter, if you find value in this community, in the events, in the private Facebook group, in the connections and resources and mentoring, then please become a paying active member of the Titanides today.

Gifts of the (Not So Secret) Order of the Titanides

When you become a sustaining member of the Titanides today you get...

- Access to our private Titanides Facebook group, where you'll find collective mentoring from some of the most experienced women in the business. You'll get practical advice, connections to top marketers, job postings, copy lessons, life lessons and so much more.
- My weekly vlog (video blog) where I share life, business and copywriting lessons I've learned from my mentors, from my clients, from copy chiefing other writers, and from my own nearly twenty years in the business.
- Our monthly newsletter packed with insights, advice, stories, upcoming events, and more!
- Twice monthly live Fearless Fast Writes. These 45-minute sessions focus on writing to discover the revelations and ideas lurking just below the surface of your subconscious. Fast Writes are a great way to spark your imagination and get your creative juices flowing.
- Invitations to special events and in-person conversations where we hone our "visiting" skills and discuss issues facing women, both in life and in our careers.
- Access to our Members-Only website where you can gorge on past newsletters, vlogs, and our first-ever Titanides conference with presentations by some of the best women in the industry. Plus, you can join our own Titanides marketplace with special offers on fantastic products for copywriters, marketers and entrepreneurs.

[**Become A Sustaining Member**](#)

And if you're already a Sustaining Member...

[Check Out What's New](#)

Thank you for becoming a founding member. I want to hug you and love you and eat chocolate and drink wine and go dancing with you when next we meet.

Titanides Visiting Together

I want to challenge you this month. If you're someone who has grown up learning how to visit in the Midwest like I have, get those rusty skills out and put them to use and start thinking of how they can help you in your copywriting and your marketing. If you're a business owner, same thing. How can you use this to get to know your customers better?

Let's practice visiting with each other. If you're going to The Makepeace Accelerated Intensive for Financial Copywriting in Baltimore, I'll be hosting a breakfast for the Titanides with the Agora women. If you're headed to Kira Hug's Copywriter Club in Real Life event in Brooklyn, we'll be having a Titanides lunch with all the female speakers.

And we'll all be celebrating the launch of our book, *Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me This Sh*t Before?* at our book launch party at AWAI Bootcamp in May.

This is our chance to practice conversational badminton and get to know each other better. I can't wait to see you!

Love,

Marcella